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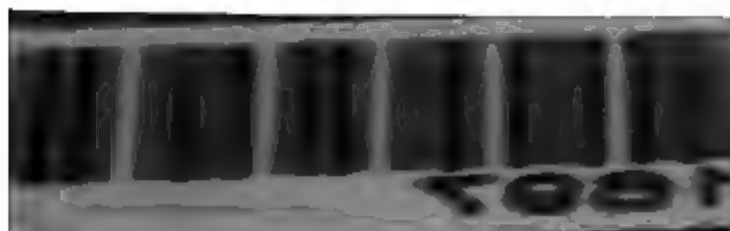
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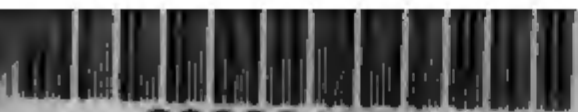
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# COTTAGE READINGS

IN

## EXODUS.

*1867*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“COTTAGE READINGS IN GENESIS.”



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## COTTAGE READINGS IN EXODUS.

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### EXODUS I. II.

**WE** are now to begin the second book of the Bible, the book of Exodus. You will remember, my friends, that the last chapters of Genesis told us of the death of Jacob and Joseph, and all his brethren, in the land of Egypt.

That was not their own country; they had been brought down there many years before, out of the land of Canaan, at the time of the seven years' famine.

You won't have forgotten how the Lord took care of His chosen people, the children of Israel, by sending Joseph before them into Egypt, where he became the governor of the country, and was able to preserve the lives of his father and all his family when the years of scarcity came.

God meant the children of Israel to stay a certain time in the land of Egypt. He had made known His will about it to Abraham long

before any of them were born, that night when He took His faithful servant out, and made him look up and see the dark blue sky spangled with thousands of stars : “ And He said unto Abram, Know of a certainty that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them four hundred years : and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge ; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. . . . But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again : for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” The Lord had given the land of Canaan to Abraham for himself and his children’s children for ever, but they were not to enter into possession till the wicked people who occupied the land then, had had a longer time given them, when some might repent and turn from their bad ways, and the rest would have grown too bad to be borne with any longer, and then the Lord would bring His own people back to Canaan, and drive out before them the ungodly race who had so long abused His mercy and patience, and gone on in their wickedness. That time was coming near when the book of Exodus begins.

The name Exodus means, “ going out.” This book tells of the going out of God’s people from the country where they had been kept in cruel bondage, into the land that the Lord had promised *them* ; but it means much more than that.



The book of Genesis, which we have just finished, began by telling how the world was made; the book of Exodus begins by telling us how the children of Israel were made into God's church, or chosen people. While we learn from Genesis how the world was created by the power of God, we learn from Exodus how it was redeemed by his love, and how His own people were to be saved, to the glory of His great name.

Holy Spirit of God! Be with us now, and teach us to give our hearts to Him who so loved our sinful world, that He spared not His very own Son, but gave His life to redeem it from the power of the evil one, and to purify His own people for Himself.

Now give your best attention, for this will need it all.

The book of Exodus begins by telling us who the children of Israel were that went down into Egypt, saying, "Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt: every man and his household came with Jacob. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." You have not forgotten how wonderfully Joseph's life was arranged to *shew beforehand the life, and sufferings,*

and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. So does his death. While Joseph lived, there were not many of the children of Israel, their number could be easily counted: but after his death, we read that the land of Goshen, which had been given them to dwell in, was soon thickly peopled. The Lord had promised many times to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, that their children should become like the stars of the sky, and the sand of the sea, and the dust of the earth, for multitude, and we see how faithful He was to His word. During the time that the Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth, His followers were very few, only a little company that could be easily counted; but as soon as He rose from the dead and went up to heaven, He sent down the Holy Spirit, who converted thousands in one day, and we know that His church shall become 'a great multitude that no man can number.' Brethren, will you not ask Him to count *you* among them?

It is likely that the children of Israel did service to the kings of Egypt in return for the protection and kindness they enjoyed; and all the time that Joseph's master, king Pharaoh, lived, and for some time after, so long as the memory of Joseph, and of all the good he had done, remained among the Egyptians, the Israelites were well and justly treated, so that they increased very much, and grew a great people.

*But some years after Joseph's death, we read*

that “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.” This king was the first of a new family. He belonged to a different part of the country, a long way to the south; so he would care nothing about Joseph, and perhaps knew nothing of the good he had done to the kings that went before him. When the new king Pharaoh came down and saw the land of Goshen so fruitful and full of people, he was displeased and jealous that the strangers in the land should be so many, and in such a thriving condition. So he proposed to the Egyptians around him that the Israelites should be brought down, saying, “Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.” The king did not pretend that the Israelites had been troublesome or rebellious, or had done anything wrong, only they might do so some day, and therefore they were to be trampled on and cruelly treated. Pharaoh did not wish to destroy them, or drive them away out of the country; they were far too useful for that; but he wanted to crush all the spirit out of them, and grind them into slaves and beasts of burden, to fetch and carry and toil for him and his people. We read in the Acts (vii. 19), that when Stephen was reminding the council of the Jews of the his-

tory of their nation from its very beginning, he came to speak about their bondage in the land of Egypt, and told them this very story. He said, "The king dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live." And king Pharaoh thought he was doing very wisely when by his unjust, inhuman conduct, he had brought them to such a pass. But he little knew what he was doing, or what misery and ruin he was helping to bring on his kingdom. He thought he was doing a clever thing to crush an innocent people who had never harmed him, but were growing too many and too strong for him to bear with; he has soon to find out what folly he had been guilty of in meddling with the Lord's people. Brethren! notice this, wrong-doing is never wise. It is never wise in the long run to do wrong, whatever profit we may think to make by it. When we do wrong, we are sinning against God, and if we only knew it, that is the maddest folly that men can be guilty of.

The new king changed the just and reasonable service that the children of Israel had been used to render to the kings of Egypt into a hard and bitter bondage. They were set to brick-making and building cities, as well as all kinds of field work; and they were kept at it like slaves, under the lash of savage inhuman taskmasters. The *land of Egypt*, which had once been a place of

refuge for them, where they had lived in peace and plenty, is now become a place of cruel suffering. Their brutal masters hoped to break their spirit, and wear them out by every kind of bad usage ; but it would not do. The children of Israel had a life and a vigour about them that their merciless enemies could not destroy. Yes, and they have it to this day. Their lives were made bitter, indeed, with hard bondage : but the more they were afflicted “ the more they multiplied and grew.” How was that ? Just because the Lord had chosen them for His own, and he would not let their enemies get the better of them. He stretched out His arm to help, and the king of Egypt could do nothing against them.

That was the same Almighty arm that, long after, was cast round three God-fearing young sons of Israel, who were thrown, bound hand and foot, into a fiery furnace, because they would not dishonour their heavenly Father at the king’s command. The Son of God was with them in the fire, and His arm kept them safe among the flames. The fire did not burn His servants, but it burned their bonds off, and left them free to walk with their Saviour. The same arm was round Daniel, the faithful servant of God, in the court of a heathen king. By the malice of his enemies, he was thrown into the den where the hungry lions were ; but he was not afraid, because his Saviour was with *him, and the fierce beasts felt the presence*

of their Maker, and became as gentle as lambs. My friends, it is just the same now. Though you cannot see Him with your bodily eyes, the Saviour is very near; He is watching over every one of His own people, that nothing shall set on them to hurt them. There is nothing so strong or so safe as even the weakest child of God is, though all the world were against him, because he leans on a better strength than his own. Remember this, that when you have cast yourselves on Jesus, when you believe in him as your Saviour, when you belong to Him as His own, faith has joined you to Him as closely as the branch is joined to the tree, and He cannot let anything really hurt you; not even death, for when it comes it only takes you to be happy with the Lord. See how the king of Egypt used all his power to hurt and weaken the children of Israel, and the more he abused and ill-treated them, the more they grew and multiplied in spite of him. God had promised Abraham that his children should be as many as the stars of heaven, and Pharaoh may do what he likes, he cannot hinder them. Just so, the Lord has taken care of His church on earth. The more it was persecuted by the powers of the world and the devil, the more it spread and increased; and many a ruler besides king Pharaoh has had to find out what a folly it is to try and curse where the Lord has blessed.

When things were in this sad state for the

children of Israel, we read that a child was born among them, whose birth could be little joy to his parents, as he was doomed to death by the king's cruel order to his people, "saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." He had before ordered that all the boys born to the Hebrews should be murdered at their birth, but he could not get his brutal command obeyed, for those who were to do it feared God more than the king; so now he changes the form of it, and orders that all the sons shall be drowned as soon as they are born. They were to be thrown into the river Nile. When a son, who was a very fine child, was born to a couple belonging to the tribe of Levi, who was Jacob's third son, his parents with trembling hearts determined to try and save him. And when his mother saw "that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." She left her babe there with a believing but an anxious heart, and set his sister to watch and see what became of him. The little girl soon saw something to look at. "The daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

And when she had opened it, she saw ~~the~~ child; and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."

The princess of Egypt came down to bathe, and seeing the little covered basket among the reeds, sent one of her maids to fetch it. How the little sister's heart would beat when she saw the princess's maid take up the basket where her baby brother lay hidden. She would go as near as she durst to hear what they were going to do with him; she saw the princess open the lid and look in, and the poor little thing began to cry when he saw that it was not his mother, but a strange face that was looking at him. But the Egyptian princess had a kind and womanly heart; she guessed directly that the lovely baby belonged to some poor Hebrew mother who must be breaking her heart at having had to part with him in such a way. She knew what the king's orders were, but she was the king's daughter, and could do what no one else would dare to do; so she resolved to save the Hebrew babe, whose piteous cry had gone to her heart.

Ah, was it not God's hand that led the princess down to the water side that morning, when she was the only person in the country who could venture to shew compassion to a child belonging to the poor ill-used people of Israel? We may be *sure that the king's orders were very strict*, for he



didn't ~~intend~~ to be disobeyed a second time; and none of his people, had they been ever so inclined, would have dared to do what his daughter did, and save the babe in spite of the king's command.

The child's sister, who had been standing near enough to notice how kindly the princess looked at him, and hear her say to her maids, that she would save him and bring him up as her own, now came quite close, and said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother." Fancy, if you can, what the baby's mother must have felt when her daughter came and told her the blessed news! Her prayers have been granted—her dear child is saved—how could she thank and bless the God of her fathers for this great mercy? It had most likely been at the risk of her own life that she had hidden her baby so long as three months from the king's officers who came to do his cruel bidding; and when she found she could not keep him from them any longer, she put him in his little ark, and with a trembling, though a believing heart, trusted her treasure to the Lord's care. St Paul tells us (Heb. xi. 23) that the parents acted by *faith*, they believed that God would preserve their child, and now they have the great joy of getting him back, and knowing that they need *not fear for him any more*.

The mother thankfully followed her daughter into the presence of the princess. "And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it." None but a mother can quite fancy what must have filled that woman's heart to overflowing, when she took him from the princess's hand—when she heard that she was to have her own darling back again to nurse, and that she shouldn't be obliged to hide him any more; for none would dare to meddle with the child who was to be taken care of for the king's daughter!

Think what it would be to the parents to have their home gladdened by the smiles of their beautiful boy, given back to them as it were from the dead; and they might well believe there was no common work in store for him whose infant life had been so wonderfully preserved. How often the sound of praise and thanksgiving must have gone up from that Hebrew dwelling!

Now my friends, especially all of you that are parents, give heed to the words that were spoken by the princess of Egypt to that Hebrew mother. 'Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' Is that not just what God says to *you* when He commits a dear child to your care? Do you think He gives children to you to do as you like with? to train them in good ways, *or let them follow bad ones just as may be the*

easiest? No, indeed; it is not so. Your children are His; and He lends them to you to bring them up for Him. Sometimes God lets you have them but a little while, and then takes them away. Perhaps He sees that you are setting your heart *too* fondly on them, or bringing them up for the world and not for Him, and in mercy to you and them He often takes them from you. Our heavenly Father is better to us than we are to ourselves, and He often won't let us keep what He sees is hurting our souls.

Mind this, dear friends, the Lord's gifts are all good in themselves, and would be our blessings if our sinful hearts didn't oftentimes spoil them and make them our curse. We all know what unhappiness there is too often in families, and how people are made miserable through the ill conduct of their children. Yet fathers and mothers don't consider that for the most part their sons and daughters turn out well or ill just according to the way they were brought up, as children. Indeed, they very often don't bring them up at all, but let them grow up just as may happen: selfish and disobedient, caring for nothing but pleasing themselves, and then the parents wonder that they've so little comfort in them. Ah! they don't train their children for God, and yet they look for God's wages. But they've no right to do that. They've no right to look for blessing and comfort in their families when *they never tried to bring them up*

to love and serve Him. They've no right to let their children grow up without caring for God, and then expect that they will love and honour their parents. They have no right to leave the field fallow, and then wonder that it grows tares instead of wheat. O brethren, that shouldn't be. Learn to look at your dear children as God's precious gifts to you for a little while. You mothers especially, who have so much more to do with the little ones, pray to your heavenly Father for them and for yourselves. Seek His help to train them as He would have them ; setting them holy Christian examples in their homes, and guiding them with gentle loving words to their Saviour.

You cannot *make* your children good, my friends, but you may surely look for God's blessing when you are honestly trying to do as He bids you : and your prayers and efforts are not lost, though you may often think so ; it can never be known till the day when all secrets shall be laid bare, how many wicked, ill-doing sons and daughters that have darkened their homes by shame and sorrow, have been brought back to the way of God, by remembering the prayers and holy lessons learnt at their mother's knee. You have every encouragement to bring your children up to please God, and then you may hope, that by His grace, they will be blessings to you while they live ; and if you should be called on by Him who knows best, to give them *back to Him*, you can look up through your tears

and think of the next meeting in your Father's house—that blessed meeting where no parting comes after.

The little Hebrew child that was saved from death by the pity of the king's daughter, stayed in his own home where he was born, watched over and tended by his mother's love, till he was old enough to do without a nurse; and when he was perhaps about three or four years of age, his mother brought him to the princess, and she took him and adopted him for her own son—giving him a right to all the blessings, and laying on him all the duties belonging to her own child. She gave him a name too. “She called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.” His name would always remind Moses where he came from.

He lived now in a grand house, with everything about him fit for a prince. He was most carefully brought up, and taught all the learning, and all the wisdom of those times; for the Egyptians were the most learned people in the world then. The princess spared nothing in the bringing up of her adopted son, but gave him the very best education that could be had. Stephen says that “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds,” Acts vii. 22. He made good use of his time and chances, and mastered all that was thought worth learning by the wise men of *Egypt*. But Moses knew that

he was no Egyptian; he knew that the ill-used, overworked Hebrew slaves were his own countrymen. His own mother had told him so—her anxious words had never faded away from his memory; how she tried with many prayers to press it down on her child's infant heart, that he belonged to God's chosen people of Israel, and that the Lord God of Abraham was their Father.

The boy grew up among the splendours of the king's court, feeling that they were nothing to him, for that he was a son of Abraham, and he looked forward, like him, to the land of promise and the heavenly city, Heb. xi. 10.

When Moses was grown up, and his own master, he took a deep interest in the poor Hebrews. He saw the wretched state they were in, cruelly overworked by their harsh Egyptian masters, and he seems to have thought they only wanted a leader in order to rise and free themselves from slavery. Moses felt angry when he thought of the wrongs of his countrymen, and he resolved to try and deliver them. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way, and that way, and, when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."

Moses was now forty years old, in the prime of *his manhood*, and he felt a strong desire to help

his people. Stephen says in Acts vii., "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian; for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not." Moses expected that his countrymen would gather round him, and hail him as their chief.

The children of Israel were so many that the Egyptians could not easily have kept them down if they had been determined to rise, and Moses seems to have thought that his taking their part to his own risk, would have brought them all round him; overjoyed to think there might be a hope of deliverance from their bitter bondage. But he was obliged to go quietly to work; and after burying the Egyptian out of sight, he went back to his house, hoping that the Hebrews would get it into their heads that a deliverer might be found for them.

But Moses had been very differently brought up from his countrymen, and he had no idea what poor broken-spirited slaves they were. When he went out among them next day, he saw two of them quarrelling; "and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" Moses tried to make peace; "he would have set them at one again, *saying, Sirs, ye are brethren;*

why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?" Acts vii. The Hebrews were not ready to be delivered at this time; they were not fit to have liberty yet. Moses saw with deep sorrow that he could do nothing for them; and as the king was very angry with him for having killed one of his subjects, and was determined to put him to death for it; and being besides exposed to the "blood revenge" of the dead man's relations, Moses had nothing for it but to fly the country. He left Egypt in order to save himself, and went into Arabia, and dwelt in the land of Midian.

Now, brethren, notice this: Man's time is not God's time. Moses thought it was time *then* to deliver his poor oppressed countrymen. He had seen enough of their misery to make his heart ache. He could not remain as prince in the court of Egypt. He resolved to give up all,—all the good things he had now, and all the greater he might have by and by,—and make common cause with the people of God, to deliver whom, he believed he had himself been preserved from death in his infancy. But God's time of deliverance has not yet come. The Lord had not sent Moses at that time. He had gone himself before he was sent; for, look here; when he saw the Egyptian abusing *the Hebrew*, "he looked this way, and that way,"



before he meddled in the matter. This way and that way! Ah, that isn't the *right* way! When we are doing God's will, when we are about our Master's business, we have not to look this way or that way; neither right nor left, but straight up to Him.

Remember this, my friends, Keep always "looking to Jesus," Heb. xii. 2. Set *Him* before you. "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths," Prov. iii. 6.



## EXODUS II. III.

**WE** read that Moses was obliged to leave the land of Egypt, because the king was going to put him to death for having killed an Egyptian whom he saw ill-using one of his Hebrew countrymen. He would leave Egypt with a very heavy heart, not on account of all the grandeur he was giving up, but because he was leaving his people in such a miserable condition, and he saw that they were not fit for anything better.

They were not yet ready for liberty, because they did not feel the weight of their chains. Their bondage must be made harder before they will be willing to leave the land of their slavery, but where they have always had plenty to eat and drink.

Moses had tried to spirit up his countrymen to rise and claim their rights as men, but he could make nothing of them ; he felt bitterly that he could do nothing to rouse them to a sense of their degraded condition. If there is to be a time of deliverance for them, it has not come yet. So he *forsook Egypt*, not because he was afraid of the

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king's anger, but because he believed that God had a work for him to do. St Paul tells us that Moses acted by faith; he puts his name among that noble band who loved God and His promises, better than the world and its pleasures; who were content to be strangers and wanderers in the earth, if only they might have their home and their good things in heaven. Listen to St Paul's beautiful words: "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward," Heb. xi. 24.

My friends, are you of Moses' mind? Would you be content to give up worldly advantages and worldly pleasures, if they came in the way of your soul's good? Would you be willing to give up a profitable place and high wages when you found that you could not keep it and have any time for God's service? Think about that, I pray you. You cannot be right, you cannot be among God's people at all, if worldly things are always first with you, if your chief desire is to get on well and make a good living in this world. The Lord Jesus knew how much men's hearts are taken up with their business and their pleasure, when he bids the people he was *speaking to one day*, reckon up what

this world's good things would be worth to any man if they should cost him his soul. Don't you remember His solemn question? and mind He is putting it to all of you, just as much as to the Jews in His own time: "What would it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark viii. 36, 37.

We see how little Moses cared for this world and all its grandeur, when he had to make his choice between the service of God and the pleasure of living like a prince in Egypt. He cast in his lot with the Lord's people, and chose a life of toil and suffering with God's presence, rather than have all the world could give him without it. That was the choice of a man who had set his heart on God, and who looked forward to a home in heaven.

When Moses fled from Egypt, he shaped his course for the land of Midian, in the south of Arabia. The Midianites were the children of one of the sons of Abraham and his second wife Keturah, so they would have the knowledge of God among them, and would be likely to receive a stranger kindly, who came into their country having the same worship, fearing the God of their father Abraham. Moses got a settlement in Midian very much in the way that Jacob had done in Padan-Aram. The daughters of the priest of *Midian* came to water their father's flocks at a well

where Moses was sitting ~~to~~ rest ; and when some of the neighbouring shepherds selfishly and rudely drove the maidens away, the stranger, who looked like an Egyptian noble, stood up and took their part ; he defended them from the coarse unmanly behaviour of their unfriendly neighbours, and then watered the sheep for them. When the young women went home and told their father what had happened at the well (for he was surprised to see them back so soon), he found fault with them for not having brought the kind stranger home, and sent them back to the well to invite him to come and accept his hospitality and thanks for the good service he had done him in befriending his daughters.

The priest of Midian and his guest seem to have been pleased with one another, for we find that “ Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.” Moses became first his shepherd and then his son-in-law, and for the next forty years he stayed on in the wilderness of Midian, taking care of his father-in-law’s sheep. His wife “ bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

What a strange place, and what a strange work for him who had been brought up in kings’ courts as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and who had perhaps been looked upon as heir to the throne of Egypt ! You *may think*, where was the use of

giving Moses such a bringing up among princes and nobles, and such an expensive education, if he was to spend the rest of his life herding sheep at the back of the desert of Midian? But God's ways are not like our ways. The Lord had a great work to do, so great that it needed a man to be prepared on purpose for it; and that is why Moses was saved from death, and brought up by the princess of Egypt; taught all that man's wisdom could teach him, and then sent into the wilderness to be taught of God. When a man has work to do for God, all the schooling in the world cannot teach him how to do it; he may learn all that masters and books can give him, but if he is to be the Lord's servant, he must have the Lord for his teacher.

Moses stayed in the deserts of Midian acting as his father-in-law's shepherd for forty years. We hear nothing of him all that long time. It was his training time. The Lord was making him ready for his work, teaching him to look to God alone, for direction and guiding.

My brethren, whenever there is a great work to be done, and a man has to be made ready to do it, he must be left alone with God. You remember how Joseph was prepared to be governor of Egypt—forgotten in the prison; and how the greatest work that ever was done, the work of man's redemption, was begun by our blessed Saviour being alone in the wilderness for forty days; no doubt con-

tinually seeking strength and counsel from His heavenly Father. Those great examples teach us, that the greater and harder our work is, the fitter we shall be to do it, if we keep much in secret prayer, getting often by ourselves and asking God to help us. We shall see as we go on with this history, how much Moses must have learnt alone with God, while he was keeping sheep in the desert.

We read next, “And it came to pass, in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Egypt sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried; and their cry came up unto God, by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

There was no end to the misery of the poor Hebrews. Although death took away the king who had treated them so cruelly, they were no better off under the next one; their sufferings became so unbearable that they sighed and cried unto God, and the cry of His people entered into His ears. He heard their groaning, and remembered His promise to their fathers. The worst is over now for Israel. Pharaoh may do what he likes, he may redouble their tasks, he may beat and oppress them more and more; he cannot really hurt them now, for they have cried unto the Lord, they have told Him of their afflictions, they have poured their sorrows

into their Father's ear, and "He will save them out of their distresses" Ps. cvii.

And will He not now, my friends? Oh yes! only try Him. Go and tell Him whatever it is that ails you; you can never go at a wrong time; you can never go too often. The Lord is just as ready to hear, and as willing to help you, as he was on earth, when he never turned a deaf ear to any poor creature's prayer, but helped and healed often before He was asked. Surely the Lord's people can truly say that their troubles lose half their weight, as soon as they honestly take them to Him. There is comfort in the very act of trusting our sorrows to our Saviour, for He is so sure to feel for us, and to lighten the load at the very time when we need it most. Let us rest on His word, my brethren. Even though our troubles, like the bondage of the children of Israel, get worse and worse for a time, we may be very sure He will not forget us.

Truly the Lord's ways are not like our ways, nor His time like our time! Moses was saved from death to be the deliverer of his countrymen from the slavery of Egypt; yet he is now eighty years old, and still keeping sheep in the desert! Moses had once tried to go before he was sent, and he had to leave Egypt for it and hide himself for forty years in the wilderness. It needed all that time to train him for his great work. He had to learn to wait on God; the fiery temper



that urged him to kill the Egyptian had to be subdued till he became "very meek, above all men." He who was to command and guide others, must first learn to obey. The people were to look to him; he had to learn to look only to God: and these needful lessons were taught to Moses during his forty years of shepherd life in the deserts of Arabia. But now the time has come. He has to herd sheep no longer, but to become the leader of God's chosen people.

In chap. iii. we read, "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." What a wonderful sight! My brethren, let us ask the teaching of the Holy Spirit to help us to understand something of the wonders of the burning bush.


The Angel of the Lord, the same whom Abraham and Jacob had seen, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; appeared in the midst of the flames before the astonished eyes of Moses. We do not read that the Lord had appeared to any of His servants since Jacob, more than two hundred years before; but now that He is going to deliver His people with a strong hand, He shews Himself to Moses to strengthen and encourage him by promises of rich blessing.

Moses was greatly surprised at the sight of the bush, blazing and yet not burnt; it seemed to him so wonderful, that he wanted to see it better: "And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I."

Notice, brethren, that Moses' anxiety to see the wonder before him was rewarded. God spoke to him. If he had turned away without caring to stay and see what he could understand, about so wonderful a thing, he might never have heard the Lord's voice; he might never have been chosen to be the deliverer of his people; but when he desired to draw near to the Lord, the Lord drew nigh to His servant.

Can there be any lesson for us in this? Does it not teach that we are to draw near to God in His house, in the place where He has appointed us to meet Him? That we are to draw near to God in reading His holy Word, and trying to understand it as much as we can? Yes, and we too have the promise of blessing: "Seek, and ye shall find," Matt. vii. 7; "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Ps. xxxiv. 10.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." That was shewing Moses whose presence he was in. He was not to go too



near; not so near as to satisfy his curiosity, but near enough to hear what the Lord should say; and to put Moses in mind of the awful Presence of God Almighty, he was to take off his shoes, as they do still in the east, and as the hat is taken off here, as a mark of respect and reverence. The place was holy, because God was there; and he must be holy and humble, who would stand before Him. Oh, my brethren, how can such creatures as we are venture to stand before a holy God? Only through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the meeting-place for God and sinners. The most holy God and the sinful children of men may come together, when Jesus is between. Listen how: God the Father's heart was full of love to poor lost man, and He longed to save Him from everlasting punishment; but there was no way to shew His love and pardon sinners without breaking His word, which told Adam that to disobey, was to die. Then God's compassion yearned over guilty, miserable man, and He Himself found a way to save him, and keep His high and holy truth at the same time. The Father's love found out a way, the only way that could be; and though it cost Him very dear, He did not spare His own Son, but willingly consented to give Him up, that He might take man's place, and bear the punishment instead. Remember, brethren, it was all because 'God so loved the world,' John iii. 16, that He did that; and now we may draw near to our Father, because

Jesus, our Brother, our Saviour, has paid our debt, borne our blame, and won for all who love Him a home and an inheritance in heaven. The Lord then said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now, before we try to consider what was meant by the burning bush, we must notice what is said about it in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was the best Explainer of Scripture, was speaking one day to the Jews about the resurrection, or rising of the body from the dead, which many of His hearers didn't believe; but the Lord shewed them that they ought to believe it, because Moses taught it at the burning bush, "when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him," Luke xx. 37, 38. The Jews were confounded when they heard that, for they professed to believe everything that Moses wrote. We see that Moses himself learnt at the bush, that the body was to be raised, by the Lord calling Himself the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; not of their spirits only, but of the men themselves, both body and spirit. The spirits of those holy men are living in paradise all this time; and their bodies shall be raised from the dust by and by, when body and spirit shall be joined together, and they shall be Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob again, and shall sit down in the

kingdom of God. Notice again, that the Lord Jesus sometimes says such a thing was spoken by Moses, and sometimes that it was the word of God. That shews us what He, who knew all truth, thought about the books of Moses: that they were nothing less than the word of God Himself. Hold fast to the whole Bible, my brethren, for it is from beginning to end, the truth of the living God.

The time has now come for the children of Israel to be redeemed out of the land of their bondage, and Moses, in the hand of God, is to be their deliverer. You remember that the books of Genesis and Exodus, and all the Old Testament histories, are like so many pictures to teach us about the work that the Lord Jesus Christ was to do. The whole Bible tells us of Him. The creation of the world shews us the way in which God's people are created anew: for as the world was made perfect, and beautiful, and good, out of what was dark, and shapeless, and confused, by the mighty power of God's Spirit; so children of the evil one, lost in sin and ignorance, are made children of God, and become holy and loving by degrees, instead of cold, and hard, and desperately wicked as they were by nature; and that is the work of the same mighty Spirit of God that made the world. So now the redemption of the children of Israel out of the land of their cruel bondage, by the hand of Moses, is made to shew beforehand, how the children of

men were to be redeemed from the worse bondage of sin and death, by the Son of God Himself coming to stand in their place, and suffer and die instead of them. Moses had to be taught how this was to be, and he learned it by the burning bush. Do you notice that it was to a shepherd feeding his flock in the desert, that this great picture of the Redeemer of the world was shewn; and when He, who shewed His good will to men by appearing in the bush, was born an Infant into our world, the first men who heard the joyful news were humble shepherds watching their flocks in the plains of Bethlehem, when the midnight-sky was lighted up with the brightness of heaven, and angels raised the hymn of praise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!"

That great sight that Moses turned aside to see, a bush burning with fire, but not consumed, blazing in the flames, yet not burnt, was a type or figure of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Person, and in His enduring sufferings; but into that we cannot enter now. In His Person, our Redeemer had two natures, the nature of God and the nature of man. The nature of God was shewn to Moses by the flaming fire, which was a sign of the Presence of God; and the nature of man was shewn by the bush, which is an earthly thing springing out of the ground. The Lord Jesus Christ is often called in the Bible, a Branch, a

Plant, a Root springing out, of the dry ground, Isa. liii. 2; and these words always mean that He took our very nature, and was born on this earth a human being just like us, excepting that He had no sin. Now listen, brethren. Any other bush than the one Moses saw, would have been burnt to ashes in the fierce flames in a few minutes; any other human creature than the Man Christ Jesus, would have perished instantly by the awful brightness of God's Presence in him, for no mere man can see God and live; but Jesus was God as well as man, He was 'the brightness of the Father's glory,' Heb. i. 3, and that brightness did not hurt His human nature. He needed to be both God and Man, in order that He might be a perfect Saviour. If Jesus had been only God, He could not have suffered and died at all—if He had been only Man, His suffering and death would not have been enough to save us; but He was both God and Man, and so was able to do and bear all that God's holiness required, and all that man's guilt and misery needed, at the same time. My brethren, you cannot understand how this can be, and I cannot help you; but we can well believe it, because it is God's truth; and it will be our happiness in heaven to praise Him for having given us such a Saviour. Let us seek to know and love the Lord Jesus more and more, for He was the dearest Gift that our Father's love could find to give us.

There are many lessons to learn from the burning bush, but we will only speak of one thing more about it. As it blazed in the flames and was not burnt, it is a picture of God's people, as well as of their Saviour. In Egypt, the children of Israel were in the fire, as we may say; every pain was taken to hurt and destroy them, but the more fiercely the flames of wrath and cruelty raged around them, the more they multiplied and grew. And God's church, His believing people, have been often and often exposed to fiery trials in all ages of the world—they have been wasted by fire and sword, the blood of His saints has been poured out like water, but the church has never been destroyed, because He who was in the burning bush, takes care of His own. He says to each of His suffering ones, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour," Isa. xliii. 2, 3.

Moses was terrified at the sight of the bush burning with fire, and "he hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Sinful men must always be afraid of God's Presence; you remember how Adam, after he sinned, was frightened when he heard God's voice, and hid himself behind the trees in the garden of Eden; and how Jacob was afraid when he saw God in his dream at Bethel. *We cannot help being afraid of meeting God,*



when we think about it, because there is something within which tells us that we have not done as we ought, that we deserve punishment, and that God has good right to be angry with us. But my brethren, that is what Jesus has done—made peace with God for us. He bore our punishment, and paid our debt, and now there is nothing to make us afraid, for “we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” Rom. v. 1. When we take Him for our Saviour, we learn to love God as our gracious Father, instead of trying to hide from Him as an angry Judge; for we know that He has put all our sins behind His back, and they shall never be cast up to us again, for Jesus is our Advocate and Friend.

But now hear what kind and gracious words came from the midst of the burning bush; surely Moses wouldn't be frightened any more when he heard them. “And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.” O brethren, to think that our heavenly Father is watching over His people so tenderly! that He knows all about us, sees all our troubles, knows all our sorrows, and is always caring for us.

“I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, *unto a land flowing with milk*

and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." The Lord here shews Moses that the time of deliverance was come, for He says, "I am come down." "In all their afflictions He was afflicted . . . in His love and in His pity He redeemed them." So He came down; His heart was set, as it were, on delivering His people, and shewing beforehand the great redemption, which the Lord Jesus Christ should come down to bring to all mankind. Nothing is hidden from the eye of God. He sees all that the rage of their enemies does to hurt His people. He will avenge their cause when the time comes. And now the Lord calls Moses to be His messenger to the king of Egypt, and to be the deliverer of His people, (though crushed, and slaved, and heartbroken, they are the Lord's people still): "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses is not so forward now to go, as he had been forty years before; he remembered how he had *failed long ago*, when he tried to rouse his country-

men to look for deliverance, and he is not willing to try it again. But the Lord graciously bore with his doubting, and encouraged him by promising to be with him. "And the Lord said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." He gave him a sign which should certify Moses that the Lord had really sent him. Still Moses is not satisfied. He said unto God, "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." My brethren, that Name is the name of the everlasting God, who cannot change—the God who never had any beginning, and will never have any end, but is always I AM. That Name belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, as He told the Jews when they asked Him if He had seen Abraham, 'Verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.' We cannot understand what that Name is in itself, but we can know something of what it is to us. It tells us that whatever we need, we shall find in Jesus.

Now listen. Are you sinners? Jesus says, I AM your Saviour. *Are you like lost sheep?* He

says, "I AM the Good Shepherd." Are you wandering in the darkness of ignorance? Jesus cries, "I AM the Light of the world." Are you guilty and wicked? "I AM he that blotteth out your transgressions." Are you weak? I AM your strength. Are you called to go through the fire of affliction? Oh then, "Fear not; for I AM with you." He says to every one that trusts in Him, whatever may be his trouble, "Fear thou not; for I AM with thee; be not dismayed; for I AM thy God." Do you see? You may put anything you need after this great name, I AM, and you will find that Jesus will be that very thing to you. To His own people, the Lord Christ is "all in all;" they cannot possibly want any good thing that they may not find in Him. That was the Name that Moses was to give to the children of Israel, when they should ask who sent him. It was as if God had said to them, as He did long after, "I AM the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" Mal. iii. 6. Ye are not wasted away, because I have promised to take care of you, and my word cannot change, for I AM the same for ever.

My brethren, see here, our redemption is eternal, the saving of our souls will last for ever; for it is the work of Him who cannot change, whose name is always I AM; never I was, or I shall be, but always I AM.

But oh, remember, that there will be many who *will one day* wish that they had never lived at all;

and they, too, will have to live for ever and ever, in that awful, fearful place, where nothing good can ever come.

Seek, my friends, seek to give your hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ; and live for Him now, and you shall live with Him in perfect joy hereafter.



## EXODUS III. IV. V.

**WE** left Moses at the burning bush, standing before God. The Lord had first shewn him that He had been taking notice of the miseries of His people; He had seen all they were made to suffer, He had heard their cry.

The cry of the distressed Hebrews did not reach the ears of king Pharaoh; he was not likely to heed any complaints of the cruelty of his own officers; if he knew how brutally the task-masters behaved, he didn't care; for year after year went by, and nothing was done to mend the condition of the poor oppressed people. They still sighed and groaned over their hard bondage, and maybe wondered if it was ever coming to an end. They little knew that their deliverance was near. But now the children of Israel are to see that the God of their fathers has not forgotten them: the Lord says to Moses, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of *Jacob*, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely

visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." God promises to take His people away from the land of their afflictions, into a land far different; a land of hills and valleys, of rocks and waterfalls, a land of rich pastures, watered by bright sparkling streams, and gay with flowers, a land very different from the dead flat of lower Egypt that they were used to, which owed its wonderful fruitfulness entirely to the overflowing of the river Nile, and the labour of its people, for it has no rain.

Many travellers have told us what a delightful country is the land of Canaan even now. The air on its breezy hill-sides is so pure, and light, and scented with sweet smelling shrubs, which make it the very home of the honey bee; while from its excellent climate and rich soil we can easily believe what it once was, and what it shall be again, only far better still; when "the days of her mourning shall be ended," Isa. lx. 20, and the land and its people shall rejoice in the presence of their King!

Moses was assured that his countrymen would listen to him this time: "And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto *the king of Egypt*, and ye

shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us : and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." Some of the chief men were to go with Moses, and make a humble request to the king that he would give the Hebrews a few days' holiday, that they might worship the Lord by offering the bleeding sacrifices, as they had been accustomed to do, but which the Egyptians most likely had never allowed since the days of Joseph ; and they asked leave to go to some distance, that they might not affront the Egyptians, nor be disturbed themselves, while serving the Lord their God in the appointed way. And the Lord goes on to say that the leave would be refused : " And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand." Pharaoh will keep them by a strong hand ; he will not let them go till he is made to feel that he is fighting against One stronger than himself. " And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof : and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians : and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty ;" but the people shall be glad to get rid of you, and will give whatever you may wish for, very willingly : " Every woman shall borrow (or *ask*, as the word really means) of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house,



jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.'

It was no more than just and fair, that the children of Israel should have those things given to them when they were leaving the country, as they had had nothing for their hard work for so many years. Those jewels and clothes would only come as part payment for extra work, during the long time they had been serving the Egyptians; they had been unjustly kept without wages till now, but the Lord has taken up the cause of His ill-used people, and will not let them be sent away empty-handed. "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." Moses is as backward now, as he was once too forward; he has not learnt yet to look up, he looks at the Hebrews, and his heart faints within him,—and no wonder, if he *would* look at them, and not at God.

In spite of the Lord's telling him that He would be with him, and would bring the people out, Moses still goes on making difficulties. He is sure his countrymen won't believe in him—they won't believe that he has God's word for what he says. We think it very strange that Moses should have been so down-hearted: that he should have thought more about the difficulties of the work, than about Him who had promised to work with

him: that he should have thought so much of what poor broken-spirited slaves he should have to deal with, and never remembered that he was to have God Almighty on his side. It *was* very strange, brethren, for it was *unbelief*; and what is so strange as that? Only it is so common, that we don't think of it. What can be so strange as that men should not believe God? when the Lord speaks, that men, the creatures He has made, should not believe Him? It was the *first* sin, to disbelieve God—it was the oldest sin, and it is the worst sin—it is the root of all other sins. Eve couldn't have believed God's word in right earnest, when she took the devil's instead; and, brethren, we needn't wonder at Moses, for we are all Eve's children. Just think now; if men really believed the word of God, would they *dare* to go on as they do? Would people go on lying and swearing, and speaking ill of their neighbours, if they believed that they shall have to give an account of every idle word at the day of judgment? Would men so often lower themselves beneath the very brutes, by habitual drunkenness, if they truly believed what God says, “that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God”? Or could men and women lead such thoroughly worldly lives, entirely taken up with the affairs of the present time, if they seriously believed that all who spend their lives forgetting God, “shall be turned into hell”? My brethren, think of these things, for they con-

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cern us all; be very sure that every word from the Lord's mouth shall come true, whether He promises or threatens; and pray diligently that He would give you the spirit of faith, to believe all that the Bible says.

When Moses still made objection, and said that his countrymen wouldn't believe that the Lord had sent him to be their deliverer, God graciously and kindly bore with his backwardness, and gave him some tokens that He would be with him. He shewed Moses that he should have the power of doing wonderful things before the people, such as were beyond man's own power to do, and that would satisfy the children of Israel that the Lord had really sent him. The power of working miracles in the sight of men is a satisfying proof that the person who has it, has been truly sent by God, and Moses, in this, was to be a type or figure of the Redeemer of mankind. You remember, the Lord Jesus Christ came working miracles, and Nicodemus, one of the Jewish rulers, confessed that was a reason for believing Him to be God's Messenger: "Master," said he, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him," John iii. 1; and that made the Jews have no excuse for not believing in Jesus, because they saw the mighty works that He did. Moses, then, was to shew signs and wonders, so that both the Hebrews and Egyptians might believe. But he hangs back

still. "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." He said he wasn't a good speaker, just as if the Lord did not know that better than he did. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." In spite of all the Lord's patient, kind encouragement, Moses almost refuses to go. "And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." This was too much! As long as his unwillingness came from a humble, lowly opinion of himself, the Lord bore with it and pardoned him; but now it looked like disobedience. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." It is surely very right to think humbly of ourselves. We cannot be too lowly in God's sight, but the moment our humility makes us unwilling to take up a work which He has laid before us, then it becomes a sin—it becomes disobedience.

My friends, never forget that your first duty is to do as God has bidden you, whatever it may be; and you will find, as Moses did, that the Lord will enable you to do whatever He lays before you, however above your power you may think it. Not that you are always to look for success in your

work, and think that because you don't see it, nothing has been done. There is one time for sowing, mind, and another for reaping. You may be sure that nothing done for God in humble faith is ever lost; it will come to light by and by. But what the Lord bids, He gives strength for. Don't you remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ desired His disciples to feed five thousand hungry men, and they thought such a thing was quite impossible, He enabled them to do it, and not one was sent starving away? And another time, when He bid a poor helpless cripple get up and carry his bed away with him, didn't He strengthen him to do it? Yes; that He did. And when He tells you all to believe on Him and be saved, He means you to try and obey Him, and depend upon it, He will help you; He will give you faith, and His Holy Spirit will teach you.

Now, notice the way God speaks to Moses. Though He was angry with him, see how mercifully He forbears with his want of faith and courage: "And he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and

thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs." Moses was content to go and do the Lord's bidding now. Why now? Because he had his brother to go with him! Ah, my friends, don't we think much more of what we can see and feel than of what we can only believe in? That's why we think so much about this world and so little about heaven.

We have seen that though God almighty promised to be with Moses, and to work by him, he could not get over his unwillingness, he could not think himself fit to undertake the task; but so soon as he is promised to have his brother with him, a man certainly neither stronger nor wiser than himself, Moses doesn't hang back any longer; he is quite ready to go and be the Lord's messenger, now that he is to have the company and the help of a human creature! The Lord mercifully considered the natural weakness of His servant. He knew the craving of the human heart for human sympathy. He made far more allowance for Moses than many of his fellow-creatures would have done. He who said at the beginning, that "it is not good for man to be alone," graciously and tenderly gave way, if we may say so, and allowed Moses to have the comfort of his brother's companionship, though we may see by and by, that he didn't always find Aaron to be a helper to him.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He sent out His disciples at one time on a missionary journey, to preach to the people and tell them He was coming; and He sent them two and two together: for He, in the fulness of His loving sympathy with His poor weak brethren, knew that they would find great comfort and help in each other's fellowship. It is written that, "Two are better than one . . . For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up," Eccles. iv. 9, 10. But remember, my brethren, that the best and kindest human friends may fail and do us mischief, as Aaron did afterwards. There is only One that we can always depend on, who can never fail us, never disappoint. Will you not ask Him, the Lord Jesus, to be your Friend and Brother? You would need none besides.

Moses went from Mount Horeb, where he had seen the great sight—a bush burning yet not consumed—back to his father-in-law, and asked his leave to go to Egypt. There seems always to have been the kindest feeling between the two, for Jethro gave his consent directly. "And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace." Then we read that "The Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for

all the men are dead which sought thy life." All the relations of the man he had killed, whose duty it would have been to take his life in revenge for the blood of their kinsman, were dead now, so that Moses could safely go back to Egypt.

Moses then set out with his wife and two sons ; and he took the rod of God in his hand,—the rod he had been used to tend the sheep with, but which he was now to use in doing mighty wonders in the name of the Lord. "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand : but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me : and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born."

My friends, when you hear that the Lord would harden Pharaoh's heart, you may be ready to say, Then Pharaoh couldn't help it ; it wasn't his fault. Ah, but it surely was ! The king of Egypt had hardened his heart towards the children of Israel ; their sufferings and misery had never awakened one feeling of pity, one touch of common compassion in his breast. He had been deaf to their cries for mercy ; he only added tenfold bitterness to their wretchedness. Such a man



was not likely to be humble and open-hearted towards God : “ For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? ” 1 John iv. 20. No ! Pharaoh had hardened his own heart in the first place against his poor fellow-creatures, and now God’s judgments, instead of softening, only harden him the more. He is left to go his own ways, and they lead him down to death.


My brethren, pray earnestly that God would never leave any of you alone to go your own ways. Our ways are always bad ways, till the Lord changes our hearts, and teaches us to follow Him who is “ the Way ” to heaven.

It appears afterwards (chap. xviii. 2) that Moses’ wife did not go down with him to Egypt, but was sent back with her two sons to her father. Moses was now left alone, but not for long ; for “ the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.”

The brothers had perhaps hardly ever met before. They must have been very differently brought up in their young days, and Moses had been in the desert of Midian for the last forty years. But now they meet affectionately, like brothers and friends who are to be employed in the same great work. “ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses

and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed : and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." They believed when they saw the Lord's messengers, as He had told Moses they would ; and they bowed down in deep thankfulness when they heard that their God had compassion on His people in their sorrow ; they worshipped, full of hope that, through His mercy, their evil days would soon be over.


Chap. v. tells us what passed when Moses and Aaron saw king Pharaoh for the first time. This was not the same king whose daughter had brought Moses up. That king, who had been so cruel to the Hebrews, had died some time ago, and this one had come after him ; but the change of masters had brought no change to the condition of the children of Israel. They were still as much oppressed, as cruelly treated, as before. Moses had never seen this king of Egypt, but he knew very well how to behave in a king's presence. Though he had been herding sheep for the last forty years, he could not forget his early bringing up among princes and great men ; and besides that, he knew whose messenger he was. He had the rod of God in his hand, and he felt, when he found



himself again in the royal halls that he had known so well as a boy, that he stood there in the name of a greater King than Pharaoh, that he had to speak to the king of Egypt for the King of kings ! And Moses did speak like the messenger of the great King. He said to Pharaoh, " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."


How astonished the proud king of Egypt must have been to hear a command like that addressed to him ! And he said, with haughty contempt, " Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." The God of Israel, indeed ! I did not know the wretched slaves had a God ; I know nothing about Him if there be such a God, and I will not let the people go. This was plain speaking, but Moses and Aaron answered, with great calmness : " And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us ; let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." They gave back no angry words, but requested the king to allow them a few days' holiday, that they might go and worship the Lord as He commanded, for fear that He might destroy the people in His displeasure at their disobedience. Pharaoh does not demean himself by even taking any notice of their petition, but finds fault with Moses and Aaron : " Wherefore do ye,

Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens." Why do you put such a thing into the people's heads, making them want to leave their work and have a holiday? There are far too many of them now, and they need to be kept hard at their daily tasks, instead of having their heads filled with such idle notions. And king Pharaoh soon shewed that he was in good earnest; he sent for the taskmasters that very day, and gave strict orders that the children of Israel were to have nothing taken off their burdens, but a great deal more laid on: "And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice unto our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words." It's nothing but idleness, what do they want with a holiday? See that they get a great deal more to do, and shut your ears to what they say. So the Egyptian taskmasters and their own Hebrew overseers went to the people, and told them what the king's orders



were: "And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw. Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not aught of your work shall be diminished." One can hardly understand how any man could be so senseless as to give such an order, and expect it to be obeyed! "So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw." Poor creatures! What misery for flesh and blood to bear; losing half the day in going through the country under the burning sun, to gather stubble wherever they could find it, before they could get their day's work begun! And they met with no mercy: "The taskmasters hasted them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw." Why, the thing was not possible, had they wrought day and night! "And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick, both yesterday and to-day, as heretofore?" The poor fellows in their extremity went to the king; they couldn't believe that he knew what was done in his name. "Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy

servants are beaten ; but the fault is in thine own people." King Pharaoh soon shewed them they needn't come to him for relief: "But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle ; therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord." He told them they were a set of lazy, lying slaves, who only pretended that they wanted to go and worship their God, that they might get away from their work ; but he was not going to be cheated that way: "Go therefore now and work ; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish aught from your bricks of your daily task." They saw there was no good in going to the king, they had no friend to look to, every one was against them ; and, in bitterness of spirit, they fall to blaming Moses and Aaron, whom they met just as they were leaving the king's presence: "And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge ; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." Moses could not say anything to the aggrieved overseers ; he felt how very hard it was for them to bear, and it was too true that his meddling in the matter seemed to have done nothing but harm, it had only made the condition of his unhappy countrymen a great deal worse. The haughty




king had been so enraged by Moses daring to command him in the name of the God of Israel to let the people go (as if any one had a right to come between him and his slaves), that he had, in fact, done everything he could to make their burdens heavier, and their wretched condition more miserable still. With a heavy heart, Moses went and pleaded with the Lord that the people were really worse off than ever: "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Moses was so bitterly grieved and disappointed that no good had come of his endeavours to help his poor countrymen, that he was ready to believe the Lord had forgotten his promise to take up their cause, and deliver them from the bondage which the king's anger at his interfering, has made more and more intolerable. He was in great distress and perplexity; he couldn't tell what to think; Moses hasn't learnt yet that when the Lord takes a thing in hand, it is as good as done; but he did what was wisest, he took his trouble and laid it before God. It is now plain that none can help but He; Moses and Aaron are full of compassion for their poor downtrodden countrymen, they have every desire to help, but they can do nothing.

The Hebrews must see plainly that it is not in Moses and Aaron they have to trust; and Moses, too, must see that all he can do himself for his people, is to pray to God that He will help them. All will be well now. All human help is vain; it is time for the Lord to work, and the time of deliverance is near at hand. Now Egypt shall see, and all the world shall know what Jehovah, the God of Israel, will do for His people. The children of Israel have had a long night of weeping; but the longest night has an end, the darkest has a daybreak; the morning is at hand, and joy will come with it. Moses need not fear; the Lord has not forgotten His own; the moment is near which shall bring triumph and gladness to Israel, dismay and death to their enemies.

My brethren, little as you may think it, you are in a worse bondage, by nature, than Israel's in Egypt. They were poor, crushed, despised slaves; but their cruel master was only an earthly tyrant, who could torment and wear out their bodies, "but after that, had no more that he could do;" but your master has far greater power, it "can destroy both soul and body in hell." Your master is sin. It came into the world with you, and you can never get rid of it by any power of your own, or by anything that parents, ministers, or friends can do. You can't change your own sinful heart, and none of these can do it for you, any more than Moses and Aaron, and the elders of Israel, could deliver





their oppressed people from the slavery of Egypt. What must you do then? Why, what did Moses do? He went to the Lord, and besought Him to have mercy and deliver them. There's what you must do. Go to Him, to Jehovah Jesus; the same Lord that Moses went to, the same Lord that redeemed the children of Israel; pray to Him to deliver you from your evil heart of unbelief and sin, and He will send His Holy Spirit to teach you to conquer your enemy, and to look up to Him as your Redeemer and Saviour. And by and by He will take His people to His home in the heavenly Canaan; and their cruel enemies, sin and death, and the evil one, shall be cast into the lake of fire for ever. Then the redeemed ones shall sing a song of praise "to Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood," Rev. i. 5. To Him be thanksgiving and glory for ever!



## EXODUS VI. VII. VIII.

**Y**OU remember that Moses went straight to the Lord, and laid his trouble about the people before Him. His prayer was heard and answered directly. We read, "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

The Lord now stands forth, as it were, on His people's behalf, and Moses shall see how He will bring about their deliverance. And in order that he may doubt and disbelieve no more, God makes Himself known by a new name: "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." The name Jehovah is only used seven times in our English Bible, and has always to do with deliverance and salvation. It is the same as I Am. God takes it now as the Redeemer or Deliverer; as if

He said, I am Jehovah, your Redeemer. The Redeemer is called in the Old Testament Jehovah, and in the New, Jesus, or "Jehovah that saveth." The holy name of Jehovah is never mentioned in the book of Genesis but once; and that is when Abraham offered his son Isaac, and God stopped his hand, and shewed him a ram to sacrifice instead. Then Abraham named the place after Jehovah-jireh, the Provider; for he then learnt to look forward to the day when the Lamb of God should be provided; when Jehovah-Jesus should come, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. But now that His people are to be redeemed out of the land of their bondage, God Almighty, the Creator, the Preserver, makes Himself known as Jehovah, "I Am," the Redeemer, the Deliverer, the God that cannot change; therefore the children of Israel may well trust in "His mercy; for it endureth for ever." And, brethren, remember that great name belongs to *Jesus*, who came in the power of God, and in the loving sympathy of holy Man, to "save His people from their sins," Matt. i. 21.

Spirit of God, lead us all to Him as our own Saviour!

God encourages Moses by reminding him that the children of Israel were the Lord's people, that He had bound Himself, too, by an agreement with their fathers, to bring them into the land He had promised them: "Wherefore say unto the children

of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage; and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord." The children of Israel were not only to be delivered from the cruelty of the Egyptians, by the mighty power of the Lord Jehovah; they were to be brought near to Him, and learn to know Him and serve Him as their own God: and all this for the sake of His covenant with their fathers. Now listen, friends. The Lord Jesus Christ did not stop when He had delivered His people from the punishment due to sin. By His Holy Spirit, He brings them each one to God as dear children, teaching them to love and obey Him as their Father: and all that, for the sake of His holy covenant with God before the world began.

Moses went to his countrymen, and tried to cheer them up, by telling them what the Lord had said; but the poor miserable people wouldn't listen to him: "And Moses spake so to the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses

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for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." They had believed Moses before when he had spoken of deliverance, but, alas! their hopes had been cruelly cheated. Moses' meddling had done no good, but a great deal of harm. Their condition is much worse than it was; their sufferings are aggravated beyond bearing; and yet the poor slaves have not strength or spirit enough left, to rise and shake off their bondage. They are thoroughly cowed; all is crushed out of them but a helpless, hopeless feeling that their misery is beyond relief, and their situation too bad to mend: they would not be deceived a second time into believing that their God has promised to help them. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land." But Moses thought that if his own people would not listen to him, it wasn't likely the king would, especially as he was but a poor speaker: "And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" Moses is put in mind that Aaron is to speak to the king the words that the Lord will say to Moses; and the Lord added that He would do many mighty wonders in the land; but that Pharaoh would not obey; till at last he could hold out no longer. And now the time has come when the king of Egypt's hardness of heart,

and proud setting of himself against the Lord, shall call down fearful judgments on him and his people ; while the children of Israel shall be gloriously delivered out of the hand of their enemies : “ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they.”

The life of Moses was divided into three times forty years. The first forty were spent in kings' courts, learning all that man's wisdom could teach him ; the second forty were passed in the desert of Midian, herding sheep, and learning from God the lessons of heavenly wisdom which were to make him ready for the Lord's work ; and now the third forty years have begun, and Moses stands before Pharaoh.

Aaron was just three years older than his brother ; he was eighty-three years of age when he went with Moses into the king's presence. “ And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you” (when the king reasonably enough should ask for a token that they were what they called themselves, messengers from God Almighty), “ then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had

commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent." The king did not think much of that ; he believed the famous wise men of Egypt could do just as well, and by their wonderful sleight of hand they managed, as conjurers can do, to change the one for the other so quick and cleverly, that it looked as if their rods had been really turned into serpents. However, they were beaten after all their skill, for " Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart in the sense of leaving him to himself, when his heart was sure to grow hard enough.

The Lord then said to Moses, " Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go." And He commanded Moses to take the rod that had been turned into a serpent in his hand, and go to meet the king when he went down to the river in the morning : " And thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness : and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord : behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink ; and the

Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river."

That was an awful threatening; and what a sight for Pharaoh to see when he came to offer his morning devotions. The grand river that flowed through the land of Egypt, and was their glory, even their god that they worshipped, as the source of all their plenty—the Nile is to be smitten; its waters turned to blood; its fish, a chief food of the people, destroyed, for they could not live in the foul and putrid stream, the horrible stench of which would corrupt and poison the air. Surely the very thought of so fearful a judgment will melt the king's obstinate hardness; but no, there is no sign. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood, and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river: and there was blood throughout all the



land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments : and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them ; as the Lord had said."

The wise men could do something like it on a small scale ; it might be easy enough for clever jugglers as they were, to take up a little water and shew blood instead of it : that they might do ; but their's was a very poor imitation of the fearfully grand miracle wrought by the Lord's servants in His name. The wise men might soil the pure water, but they could not make it clean again ; they could not change the dishonoured stream that rolled its horrid and polluting flood bearing pestilence and death on its waves, back into their own bright and glorious river, whose wholesome waters carried fruitfulness and plenty from one end of Egypt to the other.

St Paul says that those men " withstood Moses," 2 Tim. iii. 8. They set themselves against him, and tried in every way to discredit him, by shewing that he was nothing more than a magician and conjurer like themselves. And they helped to bring ruin on their country, for Pharaoh's heart was more hardened in disobedience, when he saw that his wise men could do something like the wonders that were wrought by the rod of God in the hand of Moses and Aaron ; though he must have had a blinded eye, as well as an obstinate mind, who could compare their puny imitations to

the mighty work of Him who "turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish," Ps. cv. 29. "And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. And all the Egyptians digged about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. And seven days were fulfilled after that the Lord had smitten the river."


Those who have tried it, tell us that there is no water in the world so wholesome and pleasant to drink as the Nile water; it is, when filtered, so light and pure; and in those days, it must have been just the same, till the rod of God was stretched over it in judgment.

For a whole week, the river was an object of horror, and disgust, and danger to its worshippers. Who can fancy what the sufferings of the Egyptians must have been in that hot and thirsty land? To have neither clean water to drink, nor pure air to breathe for seven days! And they saw, too, that neither their gods nor wise men could do anything to help them. Their worshipped river, that they depended on for all their blessings, is smitten before their eyes, and made a loathing to them, and they can do nothing to cleanse its foul and sluggish stream. They spend their weary time in trying to find drinkable water by digging holes in the river banks during this wonderful and awful visitation. It lasted for seven long days, but the king's heart was still too hard to give way,

—it needs more yet to bring him down. He turned his back on the men who had such tremendous power given them, and shut himself up in his palace, trying neither to see nor smell the dreadful river, which till now had been his glory and his joy.

Notice, brethren, what a lesson that was to the Egyptians, if they would have taken it; that the river which they looked on as a god, and bowed down to, was no god at all. The people gave that honour to the Nile which belonged to its Maker; so the Lord has covered it with disgrace, and turned it into their shame. The waters, which had been the grave of so many Hebrew infants, are now become the terror of the Egyptians, and kill the fish on which they mainly lived. Now see here. When we misuse God's good gifts, or when we use them without ever thinking of, or thanking Him who sends them, they are often taken away from us, or are turned into curses by our sinful ingratitude. Mind, that nothing will weigh so heavy on the souls of the lost, as the memory of blessings wasted, of good gifts misused. Oh my brethren, think now, before it is too late, what your God has given to *you*; think of your Bibles, your churches, your Sabbath days,—don't let them rise up in judgment against you, as they surely will, if you don't use them as your gracious God meant them to be used; to teach you what you need, and what great things He has done for you.

When a week had passed away—a long and dreadful week—Moses is sent again to Pharaoh with the same command. “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: and the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up, and come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs: and the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.” The king seems to have sat in sullen silence, even after he had heard what was threatened; so the judgment came. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.” Whole armies of frogs, bred in the corrupt, stagnant river, came out and filled the whole country with their hideous presence and horrid croaking. My friends, how seldom we try, many of us, to fancy we see the things we read of. We have all of us heard about the plagues of Egypt, but how little impression they have ever made on us,—how little we try to put ourselves in the place of those who had to



bear them! Just try now to think about this; how horrible a plague it must have been—and perhaps even worse for the Egyptians to bear, because they were taught to look on those creatures as sacred and holy. Not a spot safe from frogs, in town or country—the king himself suffers as much from the nuisance as his people do—his palace is full of them—his very bed is swarming—nothing could be done for frogs. The people couldn't bake their bread, for their ovens were filled with them, which sounds strange to us; but an Egyptian oven was merely a hole in the ground, lined with stones or bricks to hold the fire, and the bread was baked in an earthen pan placed over it; but now every oven was choked up with frogs. Imagine the state of the people,—overrun with those disgusting creatures, hardly hearing themselves speak for their horrid noise. What could they have thought of so very disagreeable a gift from their beloved and sacred river? If there were any thinking men among them, what could they make of it? Surely they must see that the God of the Hebrews was higher and greater than any of theirs.

We read that “the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.” There were plenty of frogs for the wise men to play tricks with. They might easily bring more out, when the Nile was all alive with them. If the magicians had taken the frogs

away, it would have shewn greater skill, and been more useful; but to do good was beyond their power. This horrible visitation made a great impression on the king; it had come more home to himself than the other. He could sit in his palace and shut his eyes partly to the dreadful calamity that had fallen on them, when the river was turned into blood; but there was no shelter for him now. The royal palace, as well as the meanest hovel, was swarming with frogs; and they shewed no respect even to the king's person: so Pharaoh's patience couldn't last so long this time.

The Nile rolled blood for seven days; but it's not likely the frogs were endured so long, for "Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." The king thus confessed that his wise conjurers were of no use; relief must come from the God of the Hebrews, and he desires that Moses and Aaron will entreat for him: "And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the rivers only?" Moses does not take his own time, but gives to king Pharaoh the honour of choosing when he will have the plague taken away: "And

he said, To-morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word; that thou mayest know that there is none like the Lord our God. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the rivers only."

One should have expected that Pharaoh had had more than enough of them already, and that he would say, Let them be taken away this very moment; but he said, To-morrow! Most likely he hoped the frogs might go away of themselves during the night, and then he had got rid of the plague without owing thanks to Moses, or his God. And Moses agreed that it should be as the king desired; and he told Pharaoh so, that he might see there was nothing accidental in it, no going away of the frogs themselves, but that the relief came directly from the hand of God. "And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank." At the very time the king had named, the plague begins to go away; but the frogs didn't go into the river again, they died where they were; and if they had been horrible when living, they were maybe worse for a time when dead; for they lay about in heaps

over the whole country under the burning sun, and the air was corrupted, so that king and people would have a disgusting reminder of the judgment for days after, as well as a solemn rebuke for their inexcusable folly, in worshipping the frog as a sacred animal. If the plague had been too suddenly removed, they would have forgotten it all the sooner. "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said. Neither the judgment nor the mercy had any effect on Pharaoh. So soon as the plague of frogs was removed, he forgot whose hand had sent it, and who had taken it away. All he cared for was to get rid of it. There was no softening about him, no thought of keeping his word, and letting his poor slaves go. He hardened his heart, and would not listen when Moses reminded him of his promise, as the Lord foretold would be the way.

Now there is a lesson for us all here. We are ready enough to wonder at the king of Egypt's hard-heartedness, but are we ourselves so very unlike him? When the Lord lays His hand heavily on any of us, do we never make promises which we are very slow to remember when the trouble is taken away? When we have been laid on sickbeds, with death staring us in the face, have none of us ever promised that if the Lord would only have mercy, and spare us just this once, we should lead very different lives, and be so



attentive to all our duties, so regular at church, and then, when the Lord has in mercy listened to the prayer, and raised us up once more to health, haven't our promises and good resolutions often been all forgotten? and it has needed another stroke, a heavier blow, a sorer trouble, to teach us *why* our Father has been so dealing with us. Ah, brethren, Pharaoh's heart, obstinate and hard as he was, was no harder than ours; and this should be the constant prayer for every one, "Create in me a new heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me!" Ps. li. 10.

Another judgment follows. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so: for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and beast: all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man and upon beast." The word here called "lice," is more properly gnats or mosquitoes, that came suddenly like clouds of dust, filling the air, and settling all over every living creature, whether man or beast.

Those who know what it is to work among bushes at the water side, on a close hot summer evening, may have some very slight notion of the


torment this plague must have been while it lasted: life must have been perfectly unbearable; for man and beast, worried into fever, or stung into madness, could rest neither day nor night for the intolerable, buzzing, blood-thirsty swarms that didn't allow them a moment's peace.

We notice that the wise men, or magicians, tried with all their skill, to bring more gnats (as if they hadn't too many already), but they could not manage the dust; it wasn't for *their* handling; so they said unto Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said." The king's heart seems only to become more obstinate; every fresh proof of God's power only stirred up the pride of his nature, and he refused to give in. Now mind this: God's Spirit will not *always* strive with you, to turn you to Him, and to make you better. If you keep on your careless, worldly ways, and give no heed to His calls, He may be provoked into leaving you alone; and then, everything that happens in the course of God's providence, that should have done you good, will only make you harder and harder, like Pharaoh.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh (lo, he cometh forth to the water), and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me: else, if thou wilt not let my

people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are." Moses is desired to go again to meet the king when he comes down to pay his morning devotions to the river Nile (he has forgotten already how it was smitten), and is again to command him, in the name of the Lord, to let the people go. But if he will not, then another plague shall be sent. Swarms of noisome creeping things of one kind and another, beetles and poisonous crawling creatures as well as flying; of different sorts, but all horrid; are to come upon the king and all his people, filling their houses, and making the very ground under their feet all alive. It would seem that the three first plagues, the bloody river, the frogs, and the gnats, had affected the children of Israel as well as the Egyptians. They needed some punishment for their unwillingness to believe in the God of their fathers, and perhaps, too, a lesson to shew them the folly, as well as the sin, of worshipping the gods of Egypt. But now there is to be a difference made. The king is told that the judgments are only to come upon him and his people, they are not to be on the Lord's people any more. No swarms of venomous creatures are to come into the land of Goshen; shewing that it was no accident of any sort that brought the plague, but

that it came directly from God's hand, and went no farther than He pleased. "And I will sever in that day," said the Lord, "the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there: to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be." The time was exactly fixed. The king might have hindered the swarms from coming if he had obeyed, but he did not, and they came. (Notice that the creeping creatures obey their Maker, though man does not.) Those swarms must have been felt as a very dreadful nuisance, and the king is ready to do something in order to get rid of them, for they destroyed the land. "And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." He is ready to let the Hebrews have time for their religious duty, but they are not to leave the country. Pharaoh was clearly afraid of losing his slaves; he was sure that if they went, they wouldn't come back; so he said, You may sacrifice to your God, but you're to do it here. Moses would not hear of that. He was not going to be put off with the half of what he asked; and he knew besides, how dangerous it would have been, and what a bloody riot would have taken place, if the Egyptians had seen the Hebrews sacrificing oxen which they worshipped as gods; and so he told the king.



Mark this, brethren, that the Lord will not be served with a *half* obedience. Half a heart is no better than none. Is it becoming, think you, in us to offer *half* to Him who gave *Himself* for us, and kept back *nothing*? Oh remember that we are not pleasing God at all, unless we try to please Him in all things, and with our whole hearts. Go and look at the Lord Jesus, if you want to know how.

“And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us.” Pharaoh, who saw the sense of what Moses said, and was besides plainly smarting under the torment of the terrible swarms, then agrees to let the people have their holiday, and go into the wilderness to sacrifice by themselves; but they were only to go a little way, three days’ journey was too far, and he desired that Moses would entreat his God to take the plague away. Moses promised to do so, and begged that the king would not cheat the people any more, by going back from his word. “And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his

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servants, and from his people: there remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."





## EXODUS IX. X. XI.

**WE** read that so soon as the terrible venomous swarms that distressed King Pharaoh so greatly, were taken away, he directly broke his word, and refused to let the people go. “Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.” The disease was to fall on all the domestic animals, and should cause very great loss to the Egyptians in their property: and again, as He had done before, the Lord would make it plain that no accidental reason had brought this terrible complaint among the cattle, as none belonging to the children of Israel should die. “And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To-morrow the Lord shall do this thing

in the land. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." The king wanted to know if it were really true that none of the cattle of Israel were dead, so he sent to inquire, and found that they hadn't lost one; but instead of believing in God, when he saw how surely His word came to pass, his heart was only more determined to do its own ways; "and he did not let the people go." The Lord's judgments now come quickly one after another: "And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast." The wise men of Egypt, who had not been able to do like any of the last plagues, are now sorely humbled, and obliged to leave off setting themselves against Moses and Aaron. They are themselves attacked by the dreadful inflamed sores: "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils;

for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians." They had helped to make the king more obstinate, by going against the Lord's messengers, and trying to shew that they had no more power than themselves, and they were justly punished. But the mortification and sufferings of the wise men, had no effect in softening their master's heart; he remained as obstinate as ever. And now an awfully solemn message is sent to the king. He had seen a great deal of God's power, and of His mercy too, and neither had any good effect on him. He had been often rebuked, and had hardened his neck (Prov. xxix. 1), now he is to be destroyed, and that without remedy: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

Oh, my brethren, take care that you don't despise or neglect the Lord's warnings! You

wouldn't set yourselves against God in so many words, but are you really believing what He says? When He sends trouble or sickness among you, do you take it as a warning to live closer to Him? When you hear the funeral bell, that is so often tolling in your ears, does it remind you that death may be very near to you, and that after death comes judgment? Does it warn you that *now* is the only time you have, and that the door, open now, may soon be shut? Do remember, my friends, you may be cold and careless too long. God's Holy Spirit may leave off trying to win you, and then, you will grow harder and harder like Pharaoh; and like him, be destroyed without remedy.

You have often heard that repentance is God's gift. It must be sought for, when He is willing to give it; and He says, "*To-day.*" "*Now* is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. You've no promise for to-morrow. Oh, I pray you, think of the king of Egypt, who hardened his heart so long in disobedience to God, that the time came when he was *given up*, and nothing was left for him, but to reap as he had sown.

The Lord goes on to say, "As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? Behold, to-morrow about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and

gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field: for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die." It would seem that though the king set himself so obstinately against the Lord, there were some among his people, who believed. They had observed that whatever the Lord told Moses to threaten, always happened, so they took warning now, and drove their cattle home before the storm came. Now let us take notice, that when mén don't believe and obey God, it is not because they need to see or hear anything more, in order to enable them to believe; it is just because they will not. Pharaoh's servants neither heard nor saw anything more than he did himself, perhaps not so much, yet some of them could believe, and he would not.

You remember the Roman officer who was standing near the cross, when our Lord was hanging on it? That man had an honest mind, and he believed, just from what he saw and heard; and he said, "Certainly this was a righteous man," Luke xxiii. 47; "Truly this man was the Son of God," Mark xv. 39. But the chief priests, who saw all that the officer did, and who ought to have believed sooner, because they had read about Him in the Scriptures; would not, but mocked and insulted Him in His dying moments. Why? Because they would not have *Him* to reign over

them. Why wouldn't the king of Egypt believe the Lord's message by Moses? It was because he didn't choose to do the Lord's will,—he did not choose to obey the Lord's command,—that was why he hardened his heart against the Lord's message. You know that *faith* always leads to obedience. The servants directly took care to house their cattle when they were warned. They believed first, and then obeyed. It is always so. Saving faith comes from the *heart*, not the head. If men were willing to leave their sin, they could believe, for they would ask God to give them true faith; but because they are not willing to part with some favourite sin, they tell you they can't believe; they don't see their way to it. My friends, *our* way and God's word won't go together. If we *will* do the one, it shews that we don't believe the other. It was so in king Pharaoh's time; it is so now: and the king of Egypt is not the only man who has destroyed himself, because he liked to go his own way, better than to obey God's word. Let him, in his pride, and in his fall, be a warning to us, how we let our hearts be hardened, through the love of some deceitful sin!

We see very plainly here, the difference between faith and unbelief. Faith obeyed, unbelief did not: "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his ser-

vants and his cattle in the field. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout all the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground: and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." We can hardly understand what an awful and tremendous judgment such a storm would be in the land of Egypt. At Heliopolis, where king Pharaoh lived, the weather has very few changes, rain seldom falls, and the sky is commonly pure and clear. Fancy, then, how the people must have been astonished and terrified by so uncommon and violent a hurricane; a storm that would have been terrific in any climate; for we read that "the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail."

The Lord takes care of His own people. He does not let His messengers, the hailstones, fall in their land, and the thunder and lightning

don't come near them to hurt them. He shewed plainly that the same arm which was stretched out in *power* to punish His enemies, was stretched over His people in *mercy*, to keep them from harm.

The storm caused terrible destruction through the land of Egypt, and immense loss of property, as well as many lives; and the king seemed to take it more to heart than he had ever done before. "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." He was ready to promise anything just then, that so dreadful a judgment might be taken away; but Moses knew that he could not be trusted. He saw that Pharaoh was not penitent, but only terribly frightened; and that, as soon as the hurricane was stopped, and the sky clear again, he would go back from his word, more hardened than ever.

And yet Moses promised to beseech the Lord for him, and said, "As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's." Though the Lord had brought sore judgments on Pharaoh, He had



shewed him as many mercies in taking them away; yet Moses has to say, "But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God." And then we read what mischief the hail had done to the growing crops: "And the flax and the barley was smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled." They lost both food and clothing; the Egyptian flax was particularly good, and the fine linen they made from it, was famous through the civilised world for long after. "But the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up." "And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh," (he was not afraid of going out into the tremendous storm, for he knew whose hand was guiding it), and he "spread abroad his hands unto the Lord; and the thunders and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured out upon the earth. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders, were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants." He sinned yet more: he broke his promise; he had made it only because he was frightened at the punishment, not because he was sorry for his sins. There was no repentance about Pharaoh; so everything that came, mercy as well as judgment, only made Him the more hardened, and his courtiers also. They were perhaps enraged at the losses they had to bear, and so were ready to follow their master's example. "And the heart of Pharaoh was har-

dened, neither would he let the children of Israel go ; as the Lord had spoken by Moses."

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh : for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him : and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them ; that ye may know how that I am the Lord."

The Lord here explains to Moses, the reasons of His treatment of Pharaoh. As neither judgment nor mercy has any effect on him, he is left to go his own way to destruction. All that the Lord had done, which ought to have made him believe and obey, had only made him harden himself in his wickedness ; and he is now to be set forth before all the world, as an example of God's righteous judgment against impenitent sinners. Mind this, my brethren, that *sin*, sin of any kind, is the abominable thing that our God hates. He *cannot* pardon it. It cannot be put away, but *must* be punished, and punished with death.

You sometimes hear people say that God is too merciful to punish men for sin, if they are sorry for having done wrong, and determined to do so no more. Then can repentance put away sin that has been committed ? Can tears wash it out ? Can sorrow make it as though it had never been ? No, brethren, no ! There is a thing that will wash

out the blackest sins; but it is not men's tears; it is nothing less than the blood of God's own dear Son! You know what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us: He poured out His blood to save us from death—death brought on by sin. God could not pardon sin, for He could not break His word; but He could, and *did*, take its punishment off us, and lay it on His own Son, and give Him up to death in our place. Jesus, the Holy One, was treated as the worst of sinners for our sake, while we are justified, or counted as good and holy, when we believe in Him; and more than that, all that believe are made more and more holy as long as they live, by His Spirit working in them.

Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, and all the good men in old times, were saved because they believed that the Lamb of God was coming in after times to die for their sins, so they had not to bear them themselves. They believed in God, and obeyed His word. But Pharaoh, the proud king of Egypt, would not believe, he would not obey, so he had to bear his sins himself, and they weighed him down to death.

Don't you go and believe anything about tears, and repentance, and mortification putting away your sins. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is *death*," Rom. vi. 23; and when God speaks, He does not say one thing and mean another. The wages of sin, *any* sin, is death; but that death

has been died already, and God does not want any of *you* to die. He says, Believe and live: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. There's a blessed truth—yes; but that's not all; listen again: "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. That is fearful; but it is God's truth: and it is far safer to believe *that*, than anything that men may choose to say against it. And do you see *that*? Salvation, or the holy happiness of your souls and bodies for ever, is not tied to repentance, but it *is* tied to faith. St Paul didn't say, Repent; he said, *Believe*—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Paul knew better than to put repentance *first*; he could not forget how he had been struck down on the road to Damascus, in the midst of his sins; and when he heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him, how he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. There was *believing* in the first place; and repentance, bitter repentance, came after.

Now, some of you may say, Well, I wish I could believe; but I don't know what it is. Can you believe a friend or neighbour when he promises to give you anything? Of course you can. We couldn't live among our fellow-men, if we could place no faith in one another,—you see that well enough. Then just take your God at His word in the same way. Believe Him, when He says in

the Bible that He loves you, and wants you to come to Him and be happy. Your child believes you when you say, Come to me and I will give you something; but you don't believe Jesus when *He* says to you, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. O blessed Saviour, have compassion on Thy poor faithless creatures, and teach us all to rest our souls on Thee !

Another sore judgment is coming on the land of Egypt. "And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field. And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians: which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh."

This new plague was very terrible. A flight of locusts, creatures something like grasshoppers,

about three inches long, came in clouds so thick as to darken the sun; and they never rose from where they settled, till every morsel of green was eaten, and the richest country looked like a bare and brown desert. Pharaoh's courtiers saw plainly that their master was getting the worst of it; he was fighting against One who was too strong for him, and they urged him to let the Hebrews go. They were afraid their country would be totally ruined, and that famine must come; for the fearful hailstorm had made sad havoc among the cattle and the growing crops, and now the locusts will destroy all that is left. "And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" The king listened to what his ministers said, and sent for Moses and Aaron to come back. "And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." Pharaoh gets furious at the idea of losing the services of his slaves, for he was sure they would never come back to a land where they had been so cruelly used, if they once got away. "And he said unto them, Let the

Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence." It was not true that Moses had only asked leave for the men to go; he never had thought of leaving the children behind. What was bad for the fathers and mothers, couldn't be good for them; and besides, Moses knew that the parents would not go very far from the place where they had left their little ones; so he had always given the Lord's command to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Surely whatever blessings we desire for ourselves, we should seek for our children. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the

hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only." Ah, brethren, that sounds very well, but there was no real repentance there. The king only wanted to get rid of the punishment, not of the *sin*. He felt the plague of the locusts, and wanted it away; but he didn't feel the plague of his own hard heart, though it was a worse plague to him than twenty swarms of locusts. But now let *us* think. Is king Pharaoh the only man who thought more about the punishment than about the sin that caused it? Ah no! If we are honest with ourselves, we shall feel that the king of Egypt is no more than a true picture of every man as he is by nature. Till men have new hearts given them, they have no dislike to sin *as* sin; they don't hate it because God hates it; they only dislike its punishment: its bad effects on their health, or good name, or comfort. They would wish, as Pharaoh did, to be without the punishment, but to keep the sin. It is a mark of a better nature begun in us, when we feel sin to be hateful and abominable in itself; it shews that we are *beginning* to be like Him whose eyes cannot



look on anything impure or unholy; and who requires perfect holiness in all who would enter heaven. Lord, teach us to hate sin, and to become pure, as Thou art pure!

Moses never refused Pharaoh's request that he would pray for Him that the judgments might be removed, though he knew the king's heart was not softened: "And he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord." And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go." He became harder through the very mercy, that should have sent him to his knees before God in humble thankfulness. He will now have to feel what woe shall be to the man who strives with his Maker! An awful thing is to happen without any warning: "The Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." Darkness, strange and sudden, came up over the whole land; so thick, that the people were sensible of the clammy

damp fog, that darkened the sky, and put out all their lights ; neither fire nor candle would burn in it ; and for three dreadful days, the people sat still in the dense and solemn blackness ; seeing nothing, and terrified to stir. Can you fancy anything more awful ? It is said in Ps. lxxviii. that “ the Lord sent evil angels among them.” If the spirits of darkness were allowed to torment the Egyptians during that fearful time, filling them with devilish thoughts and feelings at their will, surely those three days were nothing less than a shadowing forth, a foretaste of hell ; of that dread “ kingdom full of darkness, where they gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repent not of their deeds.” Rev. xvi. 10, 11.

Pharaoh had seen “ the terrors of the Lord.” He had seen the sun, his god, whose dazzling brightness is seldom shaded by a passing cloud, in the pure, clear sky of Egypt,—he had seen the glorious sun covered with a black pall ; blotted out, as it were, from the heavens ; while the earth and sky could no longer be made out, but all was wrapped up in thick, damp, heavy gloom, that not the faintest streak of light could pierce through. And that Pharaoh might be very sure whose hand had sent the darkness to Egypt, “ all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings” : the Lord made the darkness light for His own people. The proud king knows that he must give in ; but he is

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determined to hold out as long as possible, so he "called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us: there shall not an hoof be left behind: for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither."

Notice, brethren; Moses would not agree to leave anything behind. He said they could not tell what they should want for the Lord's service, till they were free from the land of Egypt. They were to serve their God as freemen, not as slaves.

They had not to work out their freedom themselves, nor to help the Lord in working it out for them; but they were to have free-will offerings of joy and thankfulness, to offer to Him when their redemption was complete, and they had left the land of their bondage behind them.

Do we not learn from that, that we must know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer from sin and death, before we can serve Him by doing good works?

We have not to help Him in saving our souls; He has done that already for all that believe in Him, without any help of ours; but we have first to trust in Him as our Saviour, and then to follow

Him as our Example. God's plan of saving men's souls, is to be learned very plainly from this book of Exodus, if we seek the Spirit's help to understand its teaching.

We read again, "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go." He could not make up his mind to the loss of a great number of slaves, whose labour was very profitable; and he flies into a passion, and breaks out in short furious words: "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more: for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." But before Moses leaves the king's presence he gives him solemn warning of the last and most terrible judgment of all. "And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that you may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down

themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee : and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger," and never came near him again, till he was sent for in haste, and went to him for the last time.

The miserable king had now nothing to hope for ; he had hardened himself against God's judgments, he has despised His mercies, he has driven away from him in anger, the man who had entreated the Lord for him ; and now he has to bear alone the crushing burden of coming anguish : the blow that is hanging over him, is the saddest of all ; and yet he will not humble himself to ask if there may be mercy still ?

Oh, brethren, if such a weight of woe is coming on those who despised the word of the Lord from the lips of His servant Moses, what will there be for them who set at nought the bleeding love of His only Son ?



## EXODUS XI. XII.

**WE** have read how Moses was driven from the king of Egypt's presence ; he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger, but not before he had declared that the Lord would send yet another token of His mighty power and of His wrath.

The last and most awful of all the judgments is now hanging over the proud and obstinate king and his people. The coming death of the first-born was made known, and declared to come directly from the hand of God Himself ; from the hand of Him who says, " Vengeance is mine ; I will repay," Rom. xii. 19 : and who was now about to avenge the wrongs and the sufferings of His people. The Lord had not forgotten the cruel murder of the Hebrew babes long ago. He had heard the cries, He had seen the anguish of the bereaved parents, when their infant sons were torn from their arms to be flung into the river and drowned, and there was mourning in nearly every family in Goshen ; now the Egyptians are to learn that the Lord repays with interest. They are

themselves to feel what it is to lose their beloved ones by a sudden and violent death ; every house in Egypt is to be smitten, everywhere the “ voice of wail ” shall be heard. From the king on his throne, to the humblest of his subjects, none shall escape. Suddenly in the darkness of midnight, when the land is wrapped in sleep, fearful shrieks of agony and terror shall resound from every palace, and mansion, and cottage in Egypt ; for death,—awful, strange, sudden death shall enter them all, and strike down the first-born son, whether the strong young man, or the blooming boy, or the little babe in its mother’s arms ; while the dumb animals would add their piteous moanings, when they found their young stiff and cold beside them. All can then feel for others, for all are smitten themselves, “ and there should be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”

You will have noticed, brethren, that even in threatening judgment, our God remembers mercy, and is slow to punish. In the case of this proud and self-willed king, how patiently the Lord bore with him ; how many lighter strokes were laid on first ; how many chances were given him to turn back from his obstinate folly, and save himself and his people from the ruin that was sure to follow their disobedience ; but it was all in vain. Pharaoh would not hear, he shut his ears to the voice of

mercy and patience ; he shut his eyes to the awful fact that the plagues would have taught him, if he had let them, that it was the Lord Almighty he had to deal with ; and that neither he nor his gods could stand before Him for a moment. Though he was often reproved, he hardened his neck in proud unbelief, and rushed on his own destruction. Now the story of Pharaoh is written for our learning ; and let us see that we profit by it, and give heed to the Lord's chastening. When trouble comes to any of you, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," 1 Peter v. 6, and try to find out why He has sent it. Be sure it did not come of itself, or without a good reason. Perhaps it is to stir you up to get rid of some secret sin, some evil habit ; but if you neglect the warning, and go on still, just as if the Lord had not spoken by that trouble, it may be you will provoke Him to send a heavier trial, a sorer affliction. When king Pharaoh's crops were ruined by the hailstorm, and his cattle destroyed by the pestilence, if he had repented then, he would not have had to weep for the loss of his first-born. Sorrow and trials are sent to God's people, to purify and make them better ; but we must take care how we use them, for if they don't do us good, they will surely do us harm, and harden us.

Mind, that affliction has no power in itself to purify ; it does us good or not, just as we take it. If we receive it as coming from our Father's love,



it draws us closer to Him ; but if we look on it as sent by an angry God, it drives us further from Him in sullen defiance. "The same sunbeam that melts the wax, hardens the clay." Let us pray that God's Spirit would make our hearts soft like wax, easily melted by the glow of our Father's love. Pharaoh's heart was as hard as a millstone ; he would not give up his own will to save all the firstborn in Egypt. It is awful to think how hardened, human beings may become, when they will follow no way but their own ; then the devil gets into them, as he did into Pharaoh and Judas Iscariot, and there is no softening—no turning back—their day of grace is gone for ever, and the day of judgment begins.

There is now a solemn stop in the story. We do not read directly of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, we read of the redemption of God's own people. Their chains are broken, their slavery is over. They are now to begin, as it were, a new life. The history of the past years spent in toil and misery in the house of their bondage, is to be blotted out ; they are to start anew as free men under the guiding of God their Redeemer.

And to shew them that the old things are passed away, the Lord commands that their reckoning shall be changed, and that, ever after, the year shall begin at the *present* month, in memory of their great deliverance. And surely it was very fit that there should be some public

memorial, to keep the people in mind of the wonderful mercy their God had shewn them.

Now, brethren, give the best heed you can, for we are taught a great truth here. This is the story of Israel's redemption; God is now dealing with them as a redeemed people; and the first thing He does, is to shew them that He looked on their past life in Egypt as a *blank*, a thing that He took no count of; and that when they begin to live a new life, they must have even a *new year* to mark it, and keep them in mind that they are no longer slaves but free men.

In this, the children of Israel were a type or figure of the church of Christ, which you know means all true believers in Him. For all these were by nature, bond slaves to Satan, serving sin, given up to their own foolish and wicked desires; and that was a worse bondage than Israel's in Egypt. Now, as long as men are living in sin, *as their habit*, God counts them as "dead"; they are not living to please Him, and their lives are no better than a blank; they are "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1; far away from God, who is Life.

But when, by His grace, a man listens to God's call, and gives his heart to Him, he is said to "be born again," John iii. 7; to have a new life; to be raised from the death of sin, to be a living man.


The eye of God was on that man all the time

he was dead in sin, (just as He was watching over the children of Israel all the time they were broiling among the brick kilns of Egypt); but now that he has believed the truth that God loves him, he has become a free man, a dear son, and his heavenly Father looks on him with love, because He sees him trusting in Jesus. And now the man's *life* has begun. "Old things are passed away." He is no longer the slave of sin. He is a new creature; he is washed clean; he hates sin now, and would not willingly commit it; and he loves God's way, and strives to grow more and more like his Lord, though he has all his life to mourn for his daily sins.

Real Christians are said in the Bible to be "dead to sin." Sin has no more power to punish them, because Jesus died in their place, to save them from having to die; and they live to God, because they are joined by faith to the living Saviour. My friends, how is it with you? Are you living for this world? thinking about and caring for this world only? or, are any of you living in the practice of sin? Ah, then, you are dead. You have not begun to live yet; God's eye sees you, but it looks on you as dead—dead to God and goodness, and alive only to the world and to sin. Remember, God will not be mocked by any of you. He has said, Gal. vi. 7, 8, "What a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." "If ye sow to the flesh," if ye live for the world and for sin, that is,

“ye shall reap corruption,” ye shall die eternal death; but if ye sow to the Spirit, if you give your hearts to God, and live for *Him*, you shall, by His grace, reap life everlasting; and have nothing more to do with sin and death for ever.

We have in this chap. xii. an account of the solemn feast which the Lord ordered the children of Israel to keep, in memory of the great deliverance which was coming to them. They were given particular directions how the feast was to be kept, and they were to keep it for ever. The Lord commanded Moses to tell the people, that on the tenth day of this new first month, every head of a family was to take a lamb for his household, and keep it up till the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, when it was to be solemnly killed by “the whole assembly of the congregation.” But if any family was too small to be able to eat the lamb that night, two or more households might join together; only it was to be eaten that same night; every one was to partake of it, and none of it was to be left. Hear what the Lord commanded. “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening, (that is, each household its own lamb). And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on



the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover." And then comes the reason for this solemn observance: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." And for seven days after the passover lamb had been killed and eaten, the people were only to eat unleavened bread, and to put away every particle of

leaven out of their houses ; and whoever disobeyed was to be put out of the congregation of Israel.

Such was the ordinance of the Lord's passover. It has a far deeper meaning to us, than it could have had to the children of Israel. Few among them would see anything in the passover lamb, beyond the feast in continued remembrance of their mighty deliverance from the cruel bondage in Egypt. But, brethren, does it shew nothing more to *us*? Was all this so carefully arranged by God Himself, to do no more than remind the Israelites of how they were brought out of Egypt? Yes. The Lord's passover meant a great deal more than that. We who live in the clear light of gospel days, have only to open our Bibles, and see there how close, and wonderful, and perfect a type the lamb and the passover were, of Jesus the Lamb of God, and of the redemption He wrought out for us. It is one of the clearest figures of Jesus, in the whole Word of God. So we must take time and try to consider it well.

Holy Spirit, do Thou lead our minds to a right understanding of it !

In the first place, This way of being saved, was no contrivance of the Israelites'. None of them ever thought of the lamb ; it was appointed by God Himself, and was to be in the full vigour of its age and strength. So Jesus, the Saviour, was none of man's providing. He was appointed by God the Father. He says, " I have found a ran-

som," Job xxxiii. 24; "I have laid help on One that is mighty," Ps. lxxxix. 19; "He shall send them a Saviour, and a great One," Isa. xix. 20; "God sent forth his Son," Gal. iv. 4.

The lamb was to be without blemish; that is, complete in its growth, with no fault of any kind, and in the prime of its age and strength; in the very perfection of a lamb's nature: it was to be without blemish; so was Jesus the Lamb of God, "without blemish and without spot." He was born into this world without a taint of sin. His human nature had not a single touch of human sinfulness. "He lived a man on earth, as pure as God in heaven." His life of three and thirty years in this world; not shut up alone, but passed in everyday companionship with men and women, fiercely attacked by the evil one, and continually harassed by wicked men, was so perfectly spotless, so entirely without even a shade of stain, from His birth to His death; that His bitterest enemies, who were always on the watch, could find nothing against Him; the very judge who condemned Him, was compelled to say, "I have found no fault in this Man," and He was condemned to death, only on the testimony of paid liars.

The lamb was to be kept up for four days, from the tenth to the fourteenth, before it was killed, that there should be time to examine and see that it was really perfect in all respects: the Lamb of God was appointed to be slain even before the world

was made ; and it is well worth remarking that the Lord Jesus made His public entry into Jerusalem, riding on the ass's colt, on the fifth day before His death, so that He was four days in the city, followed, and watched, and examined by His enemies, who left no stone unturned to find Him guilty, and could not. The lamb was to be killed between three o'clock and six, in the presence of all the assembled congregation : the Lord Jesus died on the cross after three o'clock, surrounded not only by the chief priests and elders, but by Roman soldiers, and multitudes of the Jewish people, and in the presence of crowds of strangers from all parts, who had come to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover. Is it not interesting, my friends, to observe how complete the type is ?

When the lamb was killed, the first thing was to strike some of the blood on the lintel and side posts of the door, and then they were to roast the lamb, every part of it, and eat it that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs ; whatever was left, was to be burnt. My brethren, this is a subject of the greatest importance to us, for the blood of the Old Testament was to shew forth the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, which was afterwards to be shed to take away the sin of the world. Now give earnest heed, I pray you.

Why were the Israelites commanded to strike the blood of the lamb on the upper and side posts ? It was to save them ; for when the Lord saw the



blood, He would pass over the door, and not let the destroyer go in to smite them. It was the blood that saved them, when the Egyptians were smitten. And it is the blood of Jesus which has redeemed the world, and saves every sinner that trusts in it. The destroyer of souls, cannot harm one that is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

Now, look here. The Israelites had nothing to do, but to put the blood on their houses, and shut to the doors, and they were perfectly safe through all the terrors of that awful night. They might shudder and shake with fear, when they fancied they could catch the rush of the destroyer's wing, as he swept by, carrying death into every house which had no blood on its lintel ; and when they heard the wild shriek of agony and bitter wailing, that followed him on his fearful path, they might shrink and tremble ; but that didn't alter the matter ; they were quite safe : no harm could happen, no destroyer could come near them, because the blood was between them and all danger. It is so, my friends, with every poor sinner who has gone to Jesus to save him. He is just as safe as the Israelite sitting in his house that night, under shelter of the blood of the passover lamb. Nothing can harm him, nothing can separate him from Christ's love. The destroyer cannot, for he dare not meddle with any one who has the mark of the Blood ; God's justice cannot claim him, for God's eye sees the Blood and is fully satisfied. He sees

the sinner washed in the Blood of His precious Lamb, and smiles on him well pleased. Then was it the blood only that saved that night? had the man himself nothing to do? No, nothing, but to stay in the house, and not be frightened: when he had put the blood on the door-posts, he had done his part; he could not even *see* it afterwards, for he was *within*, while the blood-stain that saved him was outside. That teaches us that with the *saving of our souls we have nothing to do*, Eph. ii. 8, 9, Gal. ii. 16; we *can* do nothing but trust them to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done the work Himself,—done it completely, and for ever,—and we have nothing to do but to take our salvation as a free gift from His hand, and give Him all the glory, and all the praise. And though many of us may have doubts and fears, and tremble to believe that such a gift can be for sinners like us, who don't deserve it, let us remember this, that it is not honouring our God, to doubt His word. He has said, “When I see the *blood*, I will pass over you.” Deserve salvation! No, surely not. But that has nothing to do with it; it is the *Blood* that saves, not our deservings. We have read that in the fearful night when the Lord passed through the land of Egypt in judgment for sin, He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in mercy, for the blood's sake; so in the awful day, when God will come forth to judge the world, and condemn the wicked; He will spare and save all those

whom He sees trusting in the Saviour's blood. They have the mark on their brow, so no one can come near to hurt them. My friends, are you trusting in the blood of Jesus to save you? Have you His mark on you? Are you, by His grace, forsaking your sins, and striving to lead new and better lives? Oh see that you are; for if your faith be true, you will try to be obedient too. And you know there is no other way than to believe that Jesus loves you, and has washed *you*, your own selves, from your sins. Have you done that? Have *you*, or *you*, or *you* done as you are commanded, and believed on the Saviour? You say, He shed His blood to take away the sins of the world. So He did; but are *yours* taken away? If not, you haven't gone to Him. Would you not have called that Israelite a madman, who should have kept the lamb's blood in a basin, instead of putting it on his door that night? Yes, surely; for he would have brought ruin on himself; and by what? By disobedience. You can see *that* well enough. You think you would never have been so mad; but ah! there is no madness so awful as that of refusing the Saviour, of setting light by His pardoning blood, of disobeying God's command to believe and be saved!

Every Israelite knew well, that it was not enough for him to *shed* the lamb's blood; it must be sprinkled too. It is not enough for you to believe that Jesus has shed His blood; it is not enough

to know that He has shed it for the whole world—it must be sprinkled on your hearts and consciences, on mine, or we are not, and cannot be saved. My brethren, think: Why should God take such pains to teach us all about the passover lamb and the sprinkling of its blood? Why did He shew us how exactly it all answered to the Lamb of God, and His blood shed for sin, if He did not know that we should all have been ruined without it? that it was the only thing in the wide world that could save us? and if He did not desire that we should never rest, till we have the blessed assurance that all our sins have been laid on Jesus, that we have pardon through His blood, and peace with God?

As soon as the children of Israel were safe within their blood-marked houses, they were to prepare the feast in memory of their deliverance.

The lamb was to be roasted with fire, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. And it was to be all eaten that night, nothing was to be left till morning. Now notice this. It is when the people are safe, through the blood of the lamb, that the Lord tells them what they have to do: and there is teaching for us here—that so soon as a man is *saved*, he begins to walk with God. By nature a man walks in his own way, but so soon as he becomes a child of God, through faith in Christ, he is led by the Spirit to walk in God's way.

We read that the first thing the saved Israelites

had to do, was to roast the lamb with fire. Roasting with fire was to shew, so far as any thing *could* shew, the fiery trial and bitter suffering our Lord went through to enable Him to save us. We are not speaking now of the fierce assaults of the devil, and the keen anguish Jesus underwent, from the brutal treatment He met with at the hands of coarse and cruel men. The lamb being put through the action of *fire*, signifies the suffering Jesus endured in our stead, from the hand of God. My brethren, it is a solemn thing to speak of that night in the garden of Gethsemane, yet how little we think about it! It was not from bodily torture that Jesus suffered. He was alone, there was nothing near to hurt Him. Did you ever try to think what could be the meaning of the agony which forced the blood through His skin, and made it fall down in great drops on the ground? "His agony and bloody sweat;" agony so fearfully intense that His human frame could not support it, and had to be strengthened by the help of an angel from heaven. And this was the dearly beloved Son of the Most High God! Was there no help for Him in heaven, except that of a creature, an angel who strengthened Him to suffer? Could His Father not put an end to all that woe, and bring His Beloved back to His own bosom in everlasting bliss? No, brethren, it could not be, without condemning the whole world to the flames of hell for ever; for when Adam sinned and broke

God's holy law, he brought the curse—that is, eternal death—on himself and all who were to come from him. But God so loved the poor ruined world, that He did not leave it to bear the curse, but laid it on His own dear Son instead. And Jesus came from heaven willingly to die—out of love to His Father's law, and from loving compassion to men. And so, because “He saved others, himself he could not save!”

Here was the “lamb roast with fire.” Jesus, “the Lamb of God,” a Man just like us, only far more tender and sensitive, feeling far more keenly than we can, because there was no sin in Him; Jesus was thus passing through the fire; enduring the hottest flames of God's holy anger against sin. And why? Because He was in our place, with all our sins upon Him, and was bearing the curse which *we* must have borne, but for *Him*. He, the holy, the sinless One, submitted to be looked on, and treated as the worst of sinners; and it was the awful weight of God's curse on the frightful load He was bearing, that crushed Him to the earth, and bathed Him in bloody sweat, while His “soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Oh, it is hard to speak such words with calmness! Jesus “was made a curse for us,” Gal. iii. 13, that is, He endured the accursed death of the cross, “for he that is hanged is accursed of God,” Deut. xxi. 23. Jesus hung on the accursed tree, and God hid His face from Him,

and the innocent One suffered the pains of hell in His soul, and a shameful and cruel death in His body, and—it was all for *us*! He bore all this, that man cannot even form any just notion of; He bore it willingly, to redeem the world; He bore it gladly, to save His church (all who truly believe on Him), “for the joy that was set before Him,” Heb. xii. 2, of bringing His loved ones home.


My friends, can you hear the story of the sufferings of our blessed Saviour, however feebly told, and not see something of the evil and dreadful nature of sin? Do you not see that, like an evil disease, sin had infected all the world; it brought barrenness and blight on the earth, and sorrow, and sickness, and death on men? It was a stain on God’s fair work, so foul, so black, so widespread, that nothing less than the blood of His only Son, could blot it out. And it was to teach men to look to *that* remedy, that God commanded the passover lamb to be killed, and its blood sprinkled on their houses. What did the blood do for them? It saved them from death. What has the Blood of Jesus done for *you*? If you are trusting in it, it has saved you from everlasting death.

Oh, brethren, when you remember that all the bitter anguish of soul and body, that was heaped on God’s innocent Lamb, when “His heart panted, and His strength failed Him,” Ps. xxxviii. 10, was because He had willingly put Himself in the place of sinners—when you listen to what was written

about Jesus more than seven hundred years before He was born: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed," Isa. liii.,—when you think of all that, must you not loathe your sins, and hate yourselves for sinning, and adding more weight to the awful load He had taken on Him?

For it was because "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made the iniquities of us all to meet on Him." *Our* iniquities; yes, brethren, your sins and mine. All the sins of His people, past, present, and to come, were made to meet on the holy Saviour's innocent head that day—it was for their sake that the Lord's "hand pressed Him sore," till the work was finished, till the death was died, that paid the debt, and set his people free.

Always remember this, my brethren: It was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that made complete amends for the sins of the world, and took away God's curse. He did not come down from heaven to teach God's will, or to be an example of holy living. He did both, but He did not *come* for either. *He came to die for sin.* All men had sinned; and sin could not be put away without the shedding of blood. So Jesus came, the Gift of God; and shed His blood, and died that we might live.






Keep fast hold of this ; it is God's truth, whoever may say to the contrary, that it was the death of Jesus Christ, and that alone, which made it possible for an holy God to pardon sinners : and when we try to think what it cost our loving Lord, shouldn't we oftener feel that we would rather *die* than grieve Him ?



## EXODUS XII.

**Y**OU will not have forgotten that the night when the Lord was to destroy all the first-born in Egypt, He commanded His own people, the children of Israel, to kill a lamb for each household; to strike some of its blood on the door-posts, to ensure the safety of their houses, and then to roast the lamb with fire, and to eat it the same night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. That was the command to the Israelites or Jews, as they were called afterwards, and we believe that everything the Lord commanded the Jews to do, was intended to teach Christians some gospel truth.

It has been said that "Every Jewish ordinance has a Christian meaning;" and you remember the meaning of the passover lamb; without blemish, and in the very prime of its age and strength; you saw last Sunday, how clearly it shewed forth Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, perfect in holiness, and mighty to save: and how the roasting of the lamb with fire shewed the awful agony that



He suffered from the righteous anger of God, when He saw Him with the world's sins lying upon Him. We read further, that the lamb was to be all eaten, nothing was to be left. Does that not teach us that if we take Christ for our Saviour, we must take Him altogether; not only to save us from punishment, but to make us good and holy; not only as a Saviour from death, but as an Example of life; not only to open to us the door of heaven, but to teach us how to walk on earth? Jesus is a complete Saviour; we must trust Him completely, and not try to put anything of our own with His perfect work; we must be as ready to follow Him now, and to bear His cross, that is, trial and suffering for His sake; as to sit with Him in glory, and to wear the crown.

We must now try to find out the meaning of eating the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The Lord said, "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." Notice first, that every one in the house, was to eat it; every one was to have a share of the roasted lamb that night. So, my brethren, every one must go to Christ for himself, and take Him for his own Saviour, and go at once. The lamb was to be eaten that night, the night of the deliverance. Some might be terrified, and little inclined to eat; it did not matter, none were to be excused, each one was to eat his share; and that very night,

for none was to be left till morning. In the same way, you are to believe on Jesus *now*, this very day. God offers you salvation now. He says, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice," Ps. xcv. 7. Nothing is said about to-morrow, you are never told to come to-morrow. God says, "Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2, and He would not have you put off till to-morrow. Mind, "to-morrow" is the devil's word; he keeps whispering in men's hearts, "Time enough to-morrow," till he has cheated them out of their lifetime, and out of their souls' salvation. "Boast not yourselves of to-morrow, Prov. xxvii. 1, what ye will do then, for you little know what it may bring forth; to-morrow is not yours, and you have no right to put off upon it, anything that ought to be done to day. Go to the Lord Jesus this very night, and take no rest till you can say, Thank God, I have found peace through the Blood !

The lamb was to be eaten by every one : Jesus says, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life," John vi. 54. Understand, brethren ; that eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, just means that we do truly believe that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was the *only* way to save our souls ; and so we cast ourselves on His mercy, because he died for us ; we take Him for our Saviour, to love and to trust in, and He will never let us perish. Now, all of you

who want to be saved, come and trust your soul to Him, each one of you, just as the children of Israel had every one, to eat a piece of the roasted lamb. The sprinkling of the blood on the door was done by one for all within, but the eating was done by each one for himself; and just so, each one must go and trust in the Saviour's death for himself, no one can do it for him.

Unleavened bread was to be eaten. In the Bible, "leaven" is almost always used to mean *sin*. It is the nature of leaven to spread, and ferment, and corrupt; and that makes it very suitable to shew the way in which sin spreads, and spreads, till it fills and corrupts man's whole nature.

The using only unleavened bread at the time of the passover, shews that they who receive Christ into their hearts by faith, are to have nothing to do with *sin*.

Now, brethren, notice this: It wasn't the unleavened bread, that saved the Israelites; it had nothing to do with it. They were saved already by the blood on the doorposts; and because they *were* saved, they were to put away leaven out of their houses, and have nothing to do with it during the seven days that the feast lasted. So it is not the believer's good life, that saves him; it has nothing to do with it. He is saved already, by the blood of Jesus; and because he *is* saved, he desires to put away sin, and to live a holy life all his days. Those who love the Saviour will hate sin,

for it cost Him so dear ; and having been washed in His blood, they will earnestly desire to be kept from sin, that it may not soil them. And what a blessed thing for His poor weak creatures, who are always failing, to remember that the precious blood “is continually cleansing them from all sin !” 1 John i. 7.

Perhaps this will shew you the meaning of St Paul’s beautiful words, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” 1 Cor. vii. 8.

Bitter herbs were mixed with the Israelite’s feast to remind him that though the danger was past, it had cost an innocent life to put it away ; and he was therefore to mingle sorrow, with his thankfulness. Christians are to learn from that, that even when sin has been put away, there will be true repentance, ay, and bitter sorrow, on account of it, when they remember how it was laid, a heavy burden on the Saviour, and that He bore it without a murmur, even to death. Surely, brethren, when we “consider Him,” we must grieve over our share in His sufferings, and pray earnestly that God would take away the love of sin from us, and keep us from falling day after day, into the same bad habits, the same evil practices, that have clung about us till now : for remember that Christians cannot do anything wrong, without *grieving* their Saviour.

Ah ! can we carelessly commit sin, when we think of what He went through in our place ?

There is something more yet. The Lord says farther, “And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand : and ye shall eat it in haste ; it is the Lord’s passover.” That was just as men would take their meal, who were prepared for a journey, and ready to start the moment they had done ; to shew the Israelites that they were now turning their backs on the land of their bondage, and setting their faces towards Canaan. That teaches us, brethren, how Christians should be down here. They have turned their backs on the world, and “are bound for the kingdom.” They have given up sin as a *habit* ; they have girded their loins, striving to put away everything that would hinder them, in doing their Master’s work ; for they don’t look on this world as their home any longer, but rather as the wilderness they are travelling through—the field of their labour—the workshop where they are being fashioned for their Father’s house in heaven.

And they are in haste : no loitering or lingering among the fading things of earth, but pressing on for the heavenly crown, which our God will give to all, who love His Son.

And then the Lord solemnly declares what is to happen that night : how He will bring destruction on the Egyptians, on their false gods, as well as

on their first-born ; and how His own people are to be taken care of, amid all the terrors of that awful judgment : “ For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment : I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” Moses says nothing in this place, about the idols being destroyed ; but when he was telling the children of Israel, nearly forty years afterwards, what had happened the last night they were in Egypt, he says, “ The Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them : upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments,” Num. xxxiii. 4.


The destruction of their images, was another stern rebuke to the people, who could be so senseless as to fall down and worship things that couldn't take care of themselves, things that they had made with their own hands. It is well worth notice, that nearly all the plagues the Lord brought on the Egyptians, were to punish them for their foolish and abominable idolatry. The river Nile, the frogs, the flies, the cattle, the sun, were all worshipped by the besotted people ; and their idols were made the means of their punishment.



My friends, you think perhaps that you are in no danger of falling into that sin of the old Egyptians; you would never think of bowing down to stocks and stones, and frogs and bulls, and creeping things; no, surely not; but you may be idolaters for all that. Our duty to God, is to love Him above all; and when we let anything else have the first place in our hearts, we are making *that* our idol; whether it be money, or a high character among our neighbours, or home and children; whatever it may be; and the Lord often punishes men, and makes them suffer, through the very things they unduly set their hearts on. Oh, brethren, are we not all guilty in this matter? Do we not all set our affections on the things of earth, more than on things above? Let us all pray to be delivered from worshipping any earthly idol, and learn to give our hearts to God alone.

Moses then gave particular directions how the feast of the passover was afterwards to be kept every year for seven days; warning the people especially, that no leaven was to be used all that time; they were not even to come near it. And when the proper time was come, on the fourteenth day of the month, "Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out, and take you a lamb, according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the

blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head, and worshipped." Do you notice that there's a lesson to you about your children here? The Jewish little ones were to be taught the meaning of what they saw; their parents were to explain every thing that the Lord had commanded, so soon as the children were old enough to ask what it meant. And are Christian parents not to do the same? Are you not to teach your children carefully in the ways of God's commandments, and to take them to His house, that they may learn His word? Yes, brethren; it is your most serious duty to see that your little ones are taught to know God's will,



so soon as they are old enough to learn. You cannot *make* your children turn out well, but you may look for God's blessing on your endeavours, if you seek His help, to train them up in the way they should go ; and that's not in their *own* way, mind, but in the way of God's commandments. And surely no schooling from strangers ought to take place altogether of the parents' teaching ; there must be the home example, and the home training, if you are to look for blessing in your children. There would be little need for Sunday schools if all fathers and mothers would attend to their children, especially on the Lord's day, and try to set before them, both out of the Bible, and by their own example, how they should love God, and their neighbour. And so the young ones would learn the blessing of godly home training, and would be teachers themselves in their turn. But in the mean time, we must be thankful there are so many Sunday schools ; for many parents are not fit to teach their children according to God's Word, and many more won't even try ; and the little ones are not to be left without Bible teaching, as we see from the Lord's command to the Jewish parents.

“ And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.” They got their lambs ready, and kept them up till the evening of the fourteenth day. “ And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from

the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone: and bless me also." The king's proud spirit was broken at last; he could hold out no longer, this last blow was too much; he gave up all they asked for, and ordered them to be gone directly, and to bless him first, for he was clearly afraid that this awfully sudden destruction of the first-born, might be only the beginning of the slaughter of all his people. And the Egyptians were very pressing that the Israelites should make haste; they would not let them put off time in baking bread, but urged them to set off directly, just as they were, and they were too glad to give them any thing they needed, or had a fancy for, in order to get rid of them, for they were in horrible fear of the dreadful Arm that had struck down their first-born, so long as the Lord's people were among them. "And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the

land in haste ; for they said, We be all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses : and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required : and they spoiled the Egyptians.” They who had long refused the Hebrews leave to go, are now thankful to buy them out. Then we read that the children of Israel began their march out of the land of their bondage. There was a great array, 600,000 men on foot, besides children. It has been reckoned that there would be nearly two millions of people altogether, counting a “mixed multitude” of Egyptians and hangers on, of one kind and another, that went with them. Perhaps all who had any reason for wanting to get away from Egypt, would take that opportunity of leaving the country ; so it made an immense host, to say nothing of all the flocks and herds, “even very much cattle,” that they took with them. It was a tremendous task for Moses to lead and govern such a multitude, but we don’t read that he drew back, or had any misgivings now : he had seen too much of the Lord’s power, and had felt His presence too much to have any doubt that He would be with him, and make

him fit to bear the heavy burden He had laid on him.


It is clear the Egyptians were in an awful fright. The Israelites, who had so often begged in vain for a short holiday, are now thrust out for good and all, in such a hurry, that they have no time to get any food ready for their journey; and had to make "unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual." Surely these cakes without leaven, dry and tasteless though perhaps they were, must have been eaten with a far greater relish than any of the savoury messes that came out of the flesh-pots of Egypt, just to make the slaves strong to work for their cruel masters! One should think their first meal, eaten by free men, would taste very sweet to them.

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." From the time that the Lord took Abraham out, and bade him look up and see if he could count the stars; for his children should be as many, and they should possess that very land of Canaan, but should first be in bondage, to a nation who would treat them cruelly, and oppress them for four hundred years. And then the Lord would deliver His people out of the hands of their oppressors, and they should be brought into the land

which He had promised to Abraham their father. And the Lord said, that He would bring judgments on the nation that treated them so ill. Now see how exactly all that has come to pass, which was spoken of to Abraham four hundred years before ! Not one word has failed, of all that was promised. Abraham's children who came down unto Egypt with Jacob, only seventy souls, are now become as many as the stars of the sky, because their God was blessing them, and increasing their numbers all the time they were so cruelly oppressed in Egypt ; and now, just on the very day He had appointed, the Lord is bringing them out with a mighty arm. No wonder that the night of the passover was "a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt ! This is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." And then the Lord gave Moses and Aaron some particular directions about the yearly observance of the feast of the passover ever after, so soon as they got to Canaan. No stranger was to eat of the passover lamb, unless he had first been received into the Jewish church, by the sacrament of circumcision ; but all the congregation of Israel were to keep the feast, in thankful remembrance of the great deliverance. "In one house shall it be eaten : thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house ; neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

The feast of the passover was always kept in after times at Jerusalem, where the Lord's house was. Jews went up from all parts of the country, and many came from other lands, to keep it there. In the New Testament we see that the Lord Jesus Christ went up every year to Jerusalem, to the feast of the passover. That was because He was born a Jew, of a Jewish mother, and belonged to the Jewish church; and so He was careful, in everything to obey the law, which God gave by Moses.

Now, my brethren, give heed, for the Jewish passover has much to teach *us*. You have heard how clearly the passover shewed the death of Jesus. The lamb was killed, and its blood sprinkled on the doors, which saved the people of Israel, when the destroyer passed by, and slew all the first-born of Egypt; shewing beforehand that the Lamb of God was to be slain; His blood was to be shed to redeem the world, and to save His people from eternal death. The lamb was to be roasted with fire, shewing the awful sufferings that Jesus was to bear from the curse of God against sin: but not a bone of it was to be broken. Now, listen. Do you remember how wonderfully that was obeyed, when the Lamb of God was hanging on the cross? Death by crucifying was sometimes very long in coming; no part of the body was wounded, that could cause immediate death, and the sufferers often lingered





two or three days, unless their bones were broken, to put an end to their agonies.

Now when our Lord and the two thieves were crucified, it was the day before the passover, when no work might be done, as it was the Sabbath, and also a high, or solemn fast day; so the bodies had to be taken down the evening before: and besides that, no bodies of men that had been hanged, were allowed to remain hanging after sunset; for they were reckoned accursed, and if left exposed, would defile the land, according to the law; so on all accounts the three bodies were to be buried that night: (ah, to think of Him, the beloved Son of God, being made a curse, and counted among evil-doers!) The chief priests of the Jews therefore asked that the Roman governor would give orders for their legs to be broken, that they might die at once, and be taken away. The Roman soldiers began with the crosses on either side, and broke the legs of the thieves; but when they came to the middle cross, and saw that Jesus was dead already, they did not break His legs; for the word of God had said, hundreds of years before, that "a bone of Him should not be broken." Can anything be more plain, than that the passover lamb was the type of the Lamb of God, which was slain to take away the sin of the world?

The passover is not kept now, my brethren, though the Jews would fain keep it if they could; for they don't yet see that it was done away when

Jesus died on the cross ; they don't yet believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the King they are looking for. They cannot keep it any longer ; but have Christians no feast to keep ? The Jews kept the passover in memory of their fathers' deliverance from Egyptian bondage ; have Christians no feast to keep, in memory of their own far greater deliverance from the bondage of sin, and death, and hell ? Yes, brethren, they surely have.

On the last evening of the Saviour's life, just before He was betrayed into the hands of His enemies by the wretched Judas ; He, as an obedient member of the Jewish church, kept the passover with His disciples, in an upper room in Jerusalem, for the last time. And then, as the Founder of the Christian Church, He ordained a new feast, which was to take the place of the old one ; for it could be of no more use, after He, the true passover Lamb, should be slain. Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to His eleven disciples (for Judas was gone about his awful work), and told them that they were to keep that feast ever after, in remembrance of Him ; and St Paul says, it is to be kept *till* the Lord comes, 1 Cor. xi. 26. He gave them bread and wine, to shew His body and blood, which were about to be given, to put away the curse of sin ; and they were to eat and drink that bread and wine, in token that they trusted in His death, to save them, and to make them clean, by washing away their sins. And the Lord shewed them that the blood of

the sacrifices, which had been offered up, by God's appointment, ever since the fall of man, meant *His*; which is the only blood that can take away sin.

You notice that Judas Iscariot, the miserable wretch who sold his Master into the hands of those who wanted to kill Him, Judas ate the passover, for he belonged to the Jewish church; but he did not partake of the Lord's Supper, because that was only meant for true disciples, only for those that love and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as their own Saviour. And after the Lord went back to heaven, all the Christians used constantly to keep the feast, which their Saviour left them to comfort and cheer their hearts, and strengthen their faith during the time He is away.

And His true disciples keep it still, in memory of the dying love of Him, who bore all the pain and the woe, and left nothing but the feast of thanksgiving, for His people.

My brethren, how is it that so few among you keep the Christian feast? Why is it that so few of you come forward to obey the Saviour's dying command, "Do this, in remembrance of me"? That was spoken to His friends, to those that loved Him,—for the Lord's Supper is only meant for the Lord's friends. But, are none of you His friends? Are none of you trusting in His death to save you? Do none of you desire to walk in His steps? Are there *none* among you who love that gracious

Saviour, and want to do as He told you? How is it that time after time, the table is spread for most of you in vain? that you coldly turn your backs on the signs of His great love, and pass your lives without ever fulfilling His last request?

Mind, every Jew had to eat his share of the passover lamb; surely every true Christian should partake of the Lord's Supper. I beseech you, my friends, look into your hearts, and see what it is that hinders you. Do you think yourselves unworthy? So you *are* in yourselves; but if you are trusting in Jesus as your Saviour, you go in *His* worthiness, not in your own. Are you afraid you may commit some great sin afterwards, and so bring damnation on your souls? But Peter committed the awful sin of denying his Lord just after he had received the bread and wine from the Saviour's own hands,—yet he was pardoned and brought back; and so would you be, if you sought it as he did.

Have you some reason for staying away that you think a sufficient one? Ah, do you remember what answer that man gave, who was asked why he had not on the wedding garment? "*He was speechless!*" And so it will be in that day, with all those, who make reasons of their own, an excuse for not doing as the Lord bids them.

There *can* be no excuse—for the Lord will *make* those *fit*, who honestly seek His grace.

Or is it, oh, is it, that you do not really love the


Lord? that you cannot yet consent to give up some favourite sin, some enslaving habit, for His sake? that your hearts are still set on the world, and you are not quite ready to follow the Lord fully? Oh, then, stay away from His table. But mind, you will be staying away from salvation—away from heaven—for there is no safety, and no peace, and no true joy, but in the love of Jesus.



## EXODUS XIII.

**T**HIS chapter begins by declaring that the Lord had a claim to all the first-born of the children of Israel, both of man and beast. He had created them, and He had preserved them from death, and now He claims them for His own.

And then Moses solemnly exhorts the people always to remember the day on which they came out of Egypt, for their deliverance was all the Lord's doing; and they were to keep the day in remembrance, from gratitude to Him: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten." And they are to begin to keep the feast, in memory of the Lord's passing over their houses, when he destroyed the Egyptians, so soon as they should get to the land of Canaan; and they were to keep it ever after, at the same time of year, in the first month. We keep Easter, at the time of the Jewish passover.



“ This day came ye out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days : and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee ; neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”

It is said that the Jews in after times, were extremely particular in obeying this command. They carefully gathered together every particle of leaven, even searching with a candle into every corner of the house, to be sure that they overlooked none; and either burnt it, or broke it into crumbs, and scattered it to the winds. That would be easily done. It was an easy matter to put away every morsel of leaven, and sweep their houses clean; it is not so easy to get rid of the leaven of malice and wickedness; not so easy to put away sin, and to cleanse our hearts. No, brethren; no searching, no washing of ours, can do it; we must cry, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,” Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. Our hearts must be searched by the candle of God’s

Spirit, and washed in the blood of His Son, to make them clean ; for it was to put away sin, and the consequences of sin, that God gave up the Son of His love ; it was to redeem the world from the curse of sin, that Jesus came to die.

Moses goes on, “And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth : for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.” And then Moses again tells the people, that as soon as they reached the land of Canaan, they were to set apart the first-born of their sons, and the firstlings of all their animals, for the Lord. The clean beasts that God had chosen for sacrifice, such as calves, and lambs, and kids, were to be offered up on the altar ; and the unclean were either to be exchanged for a lamb, or else destroyed ; they could not be taken back, they belonged to the Lord ; but all the first-born sons, were to be redeemed : “Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb ; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck : and all the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

Now, brethren, here is the *heart*, as we may call



it, of the book of Exodus. Here is Redemption. You all know what the word redemption means. You know that it means the recovery of a thing that was lost away, or given in pledge. You know too, that it can't be got back without cost ; you have to give money, before you can have your property restored. Then you have redeemed it ; it is your own again ; the cost of redemption has been paid.

Now look first at the fact, in the story of the Israelites ; and then see the grand truth it teaches. Holy Spirit, open our hearts, that we may learn something of redeeming love !

When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt in judgment, on that dreadful night when He struck down the first-born ; He passed over the blood-stained houses of the children of Israel, and did not come near them to hurt them, for He saw the *blood*, His own appointed means of safety. The first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were saved from death, but they became the special property of Him who had spared them. All creatures belong to the Lord, because He made them ; but those first-born of Israel belonged to Him in a particular manner, because He had spared their lives. But now comes in redemption. The Lord allowed His people to have their first-born sons back, but not without cost : they must pay redemption price. That which has been given to God, cannot be taken away without permission, and payment made ; but the Lord Himself gave

up His claim to the first-born children of Israel, and commanded that they should be redeemed by the payment of a fixed sum of money. "All the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."

Now, see here ; wouldn't that make the Israelites understand what redemption meant ? They would know well what was meant by redeeming, when each family had to carry the eldest born son to the Lord's house, and pay the appointed sum, before they could take it home, as lawfully their own.

Now do you think *that* law, the law of redemption, was made only to remind the children of Israel, that all the first-born of their people had been spared, when the Egyptians were smitten with death, and that they therefore became the special property of God who had spared them ?

Ah ; no, my brethren ; it had a far larger meaning. It was intended to fix the notion of redemption, firmly in the minds of the Jewish people, (and through them to teach the Christian Church), and to join with it, the shedding of blood : for when they took their firstling calf, or lamb, to the house of God, they were not allowed to redeem it ; the Lord had accepted it as clean, it was a type or figure of the Lamb of God ; and it must be killed, its blood must be poured out before the Lord ; but the unclean animals, and the sons of men, were to be redeemed. Notice that *men* are counted among

the unclean that need redemption. If a man did not choose to redeem his young ass, with a young lamb, he was to break its neck. Is that to shew, that without redemption, there can be nothing but absolute ruin? If a man refused to redeem his beast, he was to destroy it; but he had no choice about redeeming, or not redeeming his child: "All the first-born of man among thy children, shalt thou redeem."

Now, brethren, the condition of the first-born children of Israel, is an exact picture of the condition of all mankind. All men were slaves, through Adam's sin; all had become sinners; they had broken God's law, were become slaves to the devil, and condemned to everlasting death. There was no hope for them, and the worst of their condition was, that they did not know how bad it was. They did not feel that they were slaves; they did not care to be free. They were both weak and wicked; they could not help themselves, and they had no helper. Then God looked down, and saw the misery, the wilful guilt and misery of the creatures He had made so pure and so happy, and He had pity on the wretched world. In the fulness of His compassion, He determined that it should be redeemed.

But *how*? Among all the hosts of heaven, the holy "angels that excel in strength," Ps. ciii. 20, there was none who could undertake such a tremendous task, there was none who could pay so

tremendous a price; not one. To redeem ruined man, was a work far beyond the power of all the holy angels put together; for man had broken God's law, he had drawn down God's wrath upon himself, and no *creature*, not even the mightiest angel, could bear that, and live. No; to redeem the lost world, was for no angel to do; for it was man that had sinned, so it must be *man* to suffer,—it was man who had broken God's law, the law of obedience, and brought on himself the curse of eternal death in hell, for breaking it, so it must be *man* to bear the curse, to take it on himself, and let the rest go free,—it was man who had robbed God Almighty of all the love, and the obedience, and the service that were His due, from the creatures He had made, so it must be *man* to pay the debt,—it was man who had squandered away his heritage of holiness and happiness, for the guilty pleasures of sin, so it must be *man* to take the kinsman's place, and redeem the lost inheritance. And where could poor sinful, ruined, wretched *man* find such a kinsman? One who should be strong enough to bear his punishment, and high enough to make his bearing it sufficient: near enough to God, to be able to satisfy Him in all things, and near enough to man, to be able to feel for him in his lost estate, to care for him, and to help him; and rich enough to pay his debt, that couldn't be counted?

Man's Redeemer needed to be "very God," to do

all that God's holiness required ; and he needed to be "very man," to sympathise with man's misery, and to die for man's sin. Where could such a "daysman," Job ix. 33, be found, to stand between God and man, and to lay his hand on both? *Nowhere*, my brethren ; that man could reach. Fallen man could never have found a Redeemer for himself, but help came from heaven.

We are told that the Lord looked round, as it were, on all the creatures He had made, and He saw that there was no arm to save, there was none who could pay redemption's price ; and He took counsel, if we may so speak, with the Eternal Son and Spirit, and He looked down upon wretched man, and He said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24 : "I have laid help on One that is mighty ; I have exalted One chosen out of the people," Ps. lxxxix. 19. Then a Redeemer was found for man, and One who should be his near Kinsman ; for He should take part of our flesh and blood, and be born into our world, an Infant, in our very nature, but without sin. The Eternal Son of God Himself, who had been in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made, said, that He would come down in due time, to suffer in man's stead, and redeem his forfeited inheritance. He came : God's best Gift, to a world ruined and lying in wickedness. What could have moved the Father to give such a Gift, to such a world ? Do you know

what it was, that made God send Jesus? *It was love.* When we were nothing but guilty wilful sinners, *He loved us!* Listen: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16.

Did our Redeemer, when He undertook the awful task, did He know all He would have to go through? Yes, He knew all things that were coming on Him, but He would not draw back, for He knew that in redeeming the world He should save His church—His beloved; all those who were afterwards to believe in Him out of the world; and "for the joy that was set before Him," of saving them, He was content to come down, and suffer all that could be laid upon Him. Did it cost Him much to redeem the world? Oh, my brethren, who can answer? Neither men nor angels can ever know fully, what our redemption cost the Son of God; yet something has been told us, which we shall do well to consider; seeking the Spirit's help.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who had always been with God the Father as His only beloved Son, was willing for our sakes, to leave His blessed home in the highest heaven, where there was nothing but joy; to lay His glory by, and "take on Him the form a servant," Philip. ii. 7, to empty Himself of all His riches, and all His happiness, and become poor, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 3. He who was far

above all the angels, was content to take our nature, with all its weakness, and pains, and infirmities, but without any sin ; and to be born the Infant Child of a poor woman, in a very humble home ; where, as He grew up, we believe that He worked with His hands for His daily bread, and lived surrounded by those, whose ways were a continual distress to Him, because they kept not God's law. And when, after passing His youth in obscure poverty, He began to preach to His countrymen, as no man had ever preached before, His followers were only the poor and humble of the people. He was despised by most of the rich and great, hated by others, and believed in by very few ; though His days were spent in doing them good, and His nights often passed in prayer. His intimate companions, who had every opportunity of seeing His glorious and wonderful works, and of hearing His gracious words, and who best knew what a perfect life He led ; even they often vexed and grieved Him by their hardness of heart, and utter want of sympathy, as well as by their slowness to learn, and to believe the great truths He taught them. He was persecuted and ill-treated, and evil spoken of by His enemies—He was wounded and grieved by the conduct of His friends—in His time of sorest trial, one of them denied that he knew Him—another betrayed Him into the hands of those who sought His life, and they all forsook Him, in His hour of great need. And after that,

He had every kind of ill-usage to bear: falsehood, injustice, and coarse brutality, and cruel mocking; and, at last, a shameful death. Everything that the envious rage of wicked men could invent, was heaped on the holy and innocent head of the Son of God; but nothing could get the better of His lamb-like patience and gentleness; and with His dying lips, He prayed for His cruel murderers. We can understand something of all that, brethren, for these things came from the hands of men; but there was far more. There was the fearful time in the wilderness, when He was exposed in His tender human nature, to the angry and malignant attacks of the evil one for forty days, weary, and hungry, and lonely, face to face with the great enemy of God and man. Satan did all he could. He put forth all his might against the Holy One of God; but he could not tempt Him to distrust His Father, or draw Him from the right path, not by an hair's-breadth. And that was for *us*. Jesus conquered the devil in man's nature, to hinder him from overmastering us. We can form some notion of the sufferings our Redeemer went through, from evil men and devils; but the greatest and deepest, we cannot fathom, that which He endured from the hand of God. As you have lately heard; Jesus bare our curse. He appeared before the holy eye of God as the greatest sinner in the universe: for "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all," Isa.



liii. 6 ; and He hid His face from Him. He could not look on the Son of His love ; and as Jesus hung on the cross, He felt that His God had forsaken Him. That was the agony of hell ! Yet He would not draw back. He would not come down from the cross, and save Himself. He went on, and bore all, till His work was “ finished ” ; and He laid down His life, the price of our redemption. Then God’s justice was seen in heaven and earth ; “ Death, the wages of sin,” was paid, and His people were saved. Well may they cry, “ Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift ! ” 2 Cor. ix. 15.

Now, you see, that it cost to redeem us, nothing less than the life of the Son of God : “ Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In the work of redemption, man had nothing to do : he could *ruin*, but he could not *save* the world. “ No man could redeem his brother, or give a ransom for his own soul.” Our Redeemer and our redemption were alike the Gift of God. Then, brethren, be very sure that it will not be safe for us to despise it. If we neglect God’s great Gift all our lives, there will be nothing to look for, but anger and wrath to the uttermost ; our condition may be worse than that of the devils themselves, for they have never refused or slighted redeeming blood. There was no redeemer

provided for the angels that 'sinned. The Son of God did not stoop to take on Him the nature of angels, that He might redeem those that sinned; He took on Him the nature of man, to redeem him from the misery of the fall. But if men and women *will* go on living for this world only, neither knowing nor caring whether they have been redeemed or not,—if they will live and die without heeding what God has done for them,—it would have been far better for them, that there had been no Redeemer—that Christ's blood had never been shed. The Lamb of God willingly laid down His life to put away sin; but for those who refuse or neglect Him all their lives, there can be no wrath so awful as “the wrath of the Lamb”! Rev. vi. 16.

My brethren, let me ask, What is the Redeemer's blood to *you*? Is it what you are trusting in, to save you? The blood of the passover lamb had to be sprinkled on the doorposts, or else the children of Israel would not have been saved that night. Now mind this: If the blood of Christ be not sprinkled on your souls by *faith*, you have no part in it; it will not save you. But if you truly believe that it has taken away your sins,—if you are trusting to go to heaven, just because *that* blood was shed for you,—then it has become your salvation; you have peace with God; your souls are safe now, and your bodies shall be saved by and by. Every believer may cry with joy, “I will

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trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation," Isa. xii. 2; "And the life which I now live, . . . I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me," Gal. ii. 20.

You know that when a thing is redeemed, it becomes the property of the redeemer; so redeemed men and women belong to Him who paid the price of their redemption: nothing less than His own life. St Paul reminds you that "ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirits, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

Do you see, my friends? Christian men and women should look on themselves as God's servants; and they must be diligent and faithful in their lawful business, remembering that their Master's eye is on them; and honest, and true, and pure in their daily conduct towards one another, as loving, obedient children of their Father in heaven.

Do you ask, How can we be all that? Go to the Saviour, and ask help from Him; for when He *saves* a man, He will do everything else he needs, by giving him His purifying, strengthening Spirit, to cleanse his heart, to guide him in his walk through life, and to lead him to heaven.

Now, my brethren, I cannot leave this great subject without warning you again, not to be careless about your salvation. Don't think lightly about

redeeming blood. Don't go on living as if the Son of God had never died for you. The blood of Jesus is most precious in the sight of God. He loves all those who trust in it, but He will fearfully and justly punish those who think nothing about it, or who refuse to believe in it. We have read that the blood of the passover lamb was sprinkled on the sides of the door, and on the top, in the Israelites' houses, but none was put on the doorstep, for it was not to be trodden under foot. Oh take care, my brethren, that you do not trample your Redeemer's blood under foot, in the sight of God, by coldly and unthankfully living without heeding it, as if it were nothing to you! I beseech you, go to the Lord Jesus now, in humble, earnest prayer; ask Him to blot out all your past sins, and to wash you clean; and you have His promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out," John vi. 37.

We read before, that the same night the pass-over was eaten, the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Pharaoh had been obliged at last to let them go; nay, he was so terrified at the sudden and violent death of the first-born, that he ordered Moses and Aaron to be gone directly, and take all the people, and everything they had with them. "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest

peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." The road through the Philistines' country was much the shortest way to Canaan. It would only have taken them a few days; but though it was a short way, it was not the right way, it was not the way the Lord led His people. At this time, the time we are reading about, the children of Israel are a race of poor broken-spirited slaves; every noble and manly feeling has been crushed and kept down, by long years of grinding oppression, and cruel ill usage. They had been so long used to the furnaces and the brick-kilns of Egypt, that they have to learn to breathe the free air of the desert; and to be trained to liberty, before they can be fit to face dangers and difficulties, and to fight like brave men. They had no weapons of war as yet; they were workmen, but not soldiers; their hands were used to the trowel and the hoe, but not to the sword and spear, and it was too soon, to expose them to the chance of falling in with warlike enemies, and having to fight their way.

Their God tenderly and kindly considered His people's weakness, and would not have them discouraged before they had well set out; and tempted to return to slavery, to escape the sword of the Philistines. So He led them about by a much longer way, a way they would never have

chosen for themselves ; but it was the *right* way, though it led them through a wilderness. They were not afraid of losing themselves, for the “ Shepherd of Israel,” Ps. lxxx. 1, was their Guide. “ He made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not,” Ps. lxxviii. 52, 53. Surely *they* have little need to fear, who are walking in a way of the Lord’s pointing out !

“ And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.” That is, they marched in an orderly array, five abreast ; there was to be no hurry nor confusion, among those who went out at the Lord’s command. Ps. cv. says, “ He brought them forth also with silver and gold ; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” “ And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him : for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you ; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.” It is interesting to notice that Joseph’s dying request was not forgotten. The day that he looked forward to by faith, has come at last. God *has* visited his people, and they carry the bones of the noble benefactor of their race, out of Egypt with them, that they may be buried in the holy land of his fathers. And faithfully they took care of them, through all their weary wanderings, and brought them safe to Canaan.

“And the children of Israel took their way from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.” As long as their way lay along the roads they were acquainted with, the Israelites were merely directed which they were to take; but when they reached the last encampment in the land of Egypt, and saw nothing before them but the trackless sands of the desert, they must have been at a loss, if their God Himself had not become their Guide.

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.” The pillar, cloud by day, and fire by night, rising high towards heaven, that it might be seen by every eye, was the sign of the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of them. It was He who led His people out of the land of their bondage; it was He who sheltered them by the cloud from the fierce rays of the sun by day, and lighted them through the darkness of night by the flame of fire; and that, not only now and then, on some great occasions, but continually: through every danger, in all their toilsome wanderings, and through all their sinful murmurings, *He*, “the Angel of God’s Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of

old," Isa. lxiii. 9, till He brought them safe to Canaan, the land of their inheritance.

Now, perhaps you may be ready to say, Ah, the Israelites were well off: if we had but a pillar to guide us as they had, we should never go astray, but always walk in the right way. So you think, maybe, because you haven't got it—and yet, my friends, you are better off than they were. They had the pillar of cloud and fire; but you have the Word of the living God, to be "a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths," Psalm cxix. 105. The children of Israel had no Bible to guide them, as you have. You have God's will clearly written down, and you have only to "search the Scriptures," John v. 39, to learn all you ought to do. Hear what is said of that blessed Word: "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light," Prov. vi. 22, 23. What more had the Israelites than *that*? They needed to be taught as children are, by something they could see before their eyes; but "blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed," John xx. 29, in God's holy word that leads them to Jesus!

We cannot *see* our Saviour Guide; but, my brethren, He is nearer to His people now, in the truth and the tenderness of His human sympathies, than He was to the children of Israel in the pillar




of cloud and fire. He goes before them as their Guide and Shepherd—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life," John x. 27, 28; and He is always at hand to help—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20.

Be sure the Saviour is never far, from His people that He loves: by day and night He watches over them, though they cannot see Him yet; but it cheers and comforts them in running patiently, the race set before them, to look off, from the dangers and troubles of the way—off, from their weak and sinful selves—straight up unto Jesus.



## EXODUS XIV.

**WE** left the children of Israel in their first encampment on the borders of the wilderness. They had started from Egypt, the night when the first-born were destroyed, after eating the passover in grateful memory of their own deliverance, and were now, as they hoped, bound straight for Canaan. Their first march was in a north-easterly direction, and so far, they were following the straight way to their own land, through the country of the Philistines; but you remember that the Lord would not let them go that road, though it was short, because they might have had to fight their way, against an enemy accustomed to war—and the children of Israel are no soldiers as yet. The Lord, considering how unfit and unable they were to face dangers of that kind, changed their line of march, and graciously put Himself at their head, guiding them by a Pillar of cloud by day, and of fire during the night; beginning at the edge of the wilderness, where they could not have found their way without a leader, and staying with them



through all their long wanderings, till they came to the borders of the promised land.

My brethren, that is just the way the Lord Jesus Christ deals with His own people. He will not let them be tempted, more than they are able to bear, but will always make them a way to escape from the trial, that He knows will be too great for their strength, and He leads them by a way they didn't know before: it may be long and rough, but it always turns out to have been the best way in the end; for the Saviour's way will take them to the Father's house with the many mansions, where there is a place and a loving welcome for them all, and where the weary ones soon forget the toils of the road, in the blessed rest of their heavenly home.

The children of Israel are now to march in quite another direction. They had been going north-eastward, straight for Canaan; but now they are to turn and go southward, till they come close to the shore of the Red Sea, where they are to encamp.

What a strange thing it must have seemed! The host followed where the guiding Pillar led, and it has brought them into a difficulty that they can see no way out of. They had the wilderness on one side, the mountains behind, and the sea in front; and presently the king of Egypt and his army followed, and came up with them, by the same road they had taken themselves, so they were

barred in on every side. What a fearful strait for the poor Hebrews! yet they do as the Lord commands. Perhaps Moses himself was surprised, but the Lord tells him what should happen, and that it should end to the glory of His great name. He made known His purposes to His servant Moses, as He had done to Noah, before the flood of waters, and to Abraham, before the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Meanwhile the king of Egypt heard that the Hebrews had taken him at his word, and were all gone; and when he found what road they had taken, he might very naturally say to himself, Ah, these slaves have done for themselves: they'll find they're in a trap that they can't get out of; they can't escape me now; between the mountains, and the desert, and the sea, I have them fast: "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." And the Lord says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." The king is now given up to follow his own ways. He will go on defying the God of the Hebrews. He has already forgotten the death of his first-born, and seems as if daring the Almighty to do His worst. He is rushing blindly on to his ruin. "And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against

the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ?” He and his counsellors were filled with rage and shame, to think they had been such fools, as to let their slaves go, and lose all their work ; so they directly made up their minds to go after them, and bring them back : “ And Pharaoh made ready his chariot, and took his people with him.” (We notice that the Egyptian people were just as bad as the king: they encouraged him in all that he did against the Israelites.) “ And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.” The king orders out his horsemen and chariots, and no doubt expects to get up to the Hebrews, before they can have gone very far ; marching on foot, and hampered with so many women and children, to say nothing of baggage and cattle ; but he wilfully forgets the God of Israel. Pharaoh never takes Him into his account, though His mighty arm had so lately executed judgments on the gods of Egypt, and shewn to all who would open their eyes and see, what a senseless folly it is to trust in graven images. “ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel : and the children of Israel went out with an high hand” ; without any haste or confusion, but with dignity and order, as became the people who were marching under the command of the Lord of Hosts : “ But the Egyptians pur-

sued after them, (all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army,) and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord." The only road, that one by which they had come themselves, was now filled with their enemies, the cruel taskmasters, who were bent on driving them all back to the brick kilns and furnaces, more hopeless slaves than ever; and in their horror and distress, on seeing the terrible Egyptians close behind them, "they forgot the high God their Redeemer"; gave themselves up to abject terror, and "were sore afraid." It was natural enough they should be frightened at first; and yet it does seem wonderful that the sight of the cloudy Pillar should not have quieted and calmed the people. As they saw it towering high into the air, spreading a cool veil between them and the fiery rays of the sun, should it not have reminded them that the Almighty was their refuge and strength? Should they not have encouraged one another, and said, What can our cruel enemies do, when our God is with us? Yes, my brethren, we can see well enough what the children of Israel ought to have done, yet we need never fancy that if we had been in their place, we should have done

better in anything, than they did. They are a true picture of the Christian church. Are there not many times in the life of every Christian, when he murmurs against his God, and trusts in His love, just as little as they did? And does he not grieve his Saviour by his sins, and shortcomings, and inconsistencies, and vex His Holy Spirit, just as the children of Israel provoked Him in the wilderness? Yes, truly; and Christians ought to do better than they, for they have clearer light, and more knowledge than were given to the Jews.

You may ask, as perhaps some of the Israelites asked, Why should their God have led them into such terrible straits? Just to shew them that they had nothing for it, but to trust Him entirely; just to teach them that their being saved, was all the Lord's doing. They were brought into a situation that no human skill or power could help them out of, just to shew them that their help must come entirely from God; to make them feel that when their need was the sorest, the loving mercy of their God was the closest. And so it is with us. We are every one by nature, in a state of bondage that no power of man can get us out of; we must be saved from sin by God alone, or not at all; we cannot help ourselves in that matter. And His glory will be seen, in saving His people from sin and death, just as it was seen in saving the children of Israel, from the swords of the Egyptians. And, brethren, if we were never to be in trial and

distress, we should know nothing of the tender sympathy of our Saviour; if we were not sometimes brought into troubles that no human friend can help us through, we should not have the blessedness of leaning on His supporting arm, and of feeling how completely we may rest in His love. If everything always went smoothly with God's children, they would not know the love of the Lord Jesus half so well, and they would miss all the sweetness of trusting in His fellow-feeling as "the Brother born for adversity." Oh, surely it is far happier for us to have the trial, and God's consoling presence in it, than to sit always at ease, and know no sorrow, and so miss really knowing the Comforter!

Daniel would never have had such deep experience of the loving, protecting care of his God, if He had merely kept him from being thrown into the den of lions; and if the three young men had not been cast into the fiery furnace, would they ever have known so well, how tenderly the Son of God watches over His own, and suffers nothing to do them real harm? The children of Israel will soon see much more of the power, and feel much more of the mercy of their God, than if they had been allowed to march undisturbed to Canaan, and had met with no enemies, and no difficulties by the way. But now we see how they behave in their first trial, which, to be sure, was not a small one. "They cried out unto the Lord," but it

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can't have been with the voice of prayer, for they directly begin an angry fault-finding with His servant: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." The slavish spirit of fear gets the better of them at once, and they passionately find fault with Moses for having meddled with them at all; they have forgotten the beatings, the bricks and the stubble, and cry out, that they were better off in Egypt!

This first trial shews Moses what the people are made of, and what a task lies before him: but he is full of trusting expectation; he looks for great things from God's hand, and has no fear. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Fear ye not! Stand still! Just the two hardest things, for people situated as the Israelites were! They were surrounded on all sides, and had no possible way of escape; they looked for nothing but death, either


from the swords of the enraged Egyptians, or from the roaring waves of the sea, perhaps both ; and yet Moses can tell them not to be afraid, and to stand still ! What else is there to do ? It's of no use to try either to climb the mountains, or to find their way through the desert, in the face of their enemies ; they must just be quiet ; they cannot help themselves, they have only to stand still, and see how God will help them. When men are at their wit's end, and can do nothing for themselves, then it is the Lord's time to work ; they have nothing to do but to stand still, and give glory to Him who does all for them.

The children of Israel were now to trust themselves entirely to their God ; and surely, when they remembered what He had done for them already, they need not have been afraid. While Moses had been shewing a firm and calm front, to the angry and terrified crowd, striving to compose and quiet them down, and spiring them up to behave like men, in face of a danger they could neither get the better of, nor flee from, his heart sank within him at this view of the cowardly and craven spirit of his people. He painfully saw what poor degraded creatures they were ; good for nothing but toiling under the lash, without a spark of the manly feeling, which would have led them rather to die, as free men in the desert, than to wear out their wretched lives, as slaves in Egypt. He felt how ready they were to turn upon him, the

moment things looked threatening before them ; and in his trouble and sorrow of mind, he raised his eyes to the Lord, and was praying, perhaps that the sinful murmuring of the people might be forgiven, when the Lord reminds him that now, is the time for action : “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me ? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” Forward ? Where to ? There was nothing before them but the deep water of the Red Sea, stretching for miles across, and dividing Egypt from Arabia ; and it is exactly into the sea, that they are ordered to go. The same voice which before had commanded the people to stand still, now orders them to go forward, while the Lord enables them to do it, by making a way before them. He says to Moses, “ Lift thou up thy rod and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it ; and the children of Israel shall go on dry land through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them : and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.” Then the guiding Pillar moved before the hosts of Israel, and the roaring waves of the Red Sea fell back at its presence ; just as, long afterwards, the stormy waves on the Sea of Galilee smoothed their foaming crests, and became quiet and calm, when He who was in the pillar of cloud and fire, stood up in the little ship as Jesus of

Nazareth, and said, "Peace, be still." And the vast multitude of Israel go into the sea, and, behold, to their astonishment, the waters standing up like a solid wall on each side, while they are marching on firm dry land between them!

And now the Pillar moves to the rear, and goes behind them. The way was plain. The Israelites have nothing to do but to go forward, and the waves part before their feet, making them a safe path, with a protecting wall of water on either hand; while the Pillar was between them and their enemies, who were foolhardy enough to follow them into the sea. "And the angel of the Lord, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them; and the Pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his



horsemen." St Paul says that the children of Israel went by *faith*: "Through faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land," Heb. xi. 29. By the light of the fiery pillar they saw the deep waters before them, which opened a way, as they went forward, step by step, on the wondrous path that God had made for them: "And He led them on safely, so that they feared not," Ps. lxxviii. 53; for now they knew that the Lord, was the God who was saving them. Surely, that midnight march on the bottom of the sea, was the march of faith; for at any moment the tremendous watery walls might fall down and overwhelm them; and they could do nothing but go forward, trusting in their God. "And it came to pass, that, in the morning watch, the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels, that they drave them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel: for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

As the day began to dawn, the Egyptians felt that the God of the Hebrews was against them. An awful terror fell upon them, from the Pillar of cloud and fire. They began to feel what it was, to fight against the Lord God of Israel, and were anxious to turn about, and escape by the way they had come; but it was too late. We have heard, my brethren, of wicked men being pursued by

“the terrors of the Lord”: their evil conscience stings them like undying vipers; and they have, as it were, a foretaste of hell. Men who have lived in open and daring rebellion, and disobedience to God, all their lives, are sometimes made to feel, before they leave this world, what it will be, to dwell with God’s enemies for ever. They have a glimpse, even here, of the torments of the damned; and see, when too late, that all their efforts against God, have only brought about their own ruin, body and soul!

The king of Egypt now knew that he was lost. In vain he strove and struggled to go back. His once despised and ill-used slaves, are now become terrible in his eyes. What would he have given then, that he had let them go in peace? How he must have cursed the presumptuous madness that led him to measure himself with the God of the Hebrews!

Pharaoh had long despised the threatenings of the Lord; now his end will be destruction, and it is close at hand. In vain his gallant horsemen, his war chariots, the pomp and pride of Egypt, strive to turn round and flee; they sink in the yielding sand; all their efforts only increase the dreadful confusion; the terror of the Lord is on them; the splendid host is now a fear-stricken, dismayed rabble, pushing and struggling to get further away from the awful Pillar, which frowns gloomily upon them, covering them with a black

pall of darkness, which will soon be eternal, for their last hour has come.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.”

What could be added, my brethren, to that grand description? No words can make it plainer. We seem to see the children of Israel, gathered in knots along the shore, talking together with throbbing hearts, of the wonderful night march; and every now and then stopping to look, with a mixture of awe and thankfulness, at the dead bodies of their

late masters, cast up by the waves at their feet ; while the Red Sea itself, looked as calm and peaceful in the morning sunshine, as if its waters had not been stopped in their course, by their Creator's hand, nor had rushed back, and overwhelmed the pride and glory of Egypt, since the dawning of day !

What must Israel have felt, when they saw the Egyptians lying dead before their eyes ? when they thought of the thousands buried beneath the waves, through which they themselves had been brought in safety ? Surely their hearts would swell with grateful love to their fathers' God, who had so nobly kept His promise, to bring them out of the house of their bondage ; and they would with joyful yet solemn feelings, obey their leader's signal, and gather round him to lift up their voices in the hymn of praise : " Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously : the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

This is the oldest and grandest hymn that has ever been written. Oh ! what it must have been, to hear it rising towards heaven, from the voices of hundreds of thousands, all, as one man, sending up praise and glory to the Lord Almighty ! As we listen to its noble words, the whole tremendous




scene rises before us, and we feel how little man is, with all his pomp and power, if the Lord do but speak. You will notice that it is to God alone, the glory is given; there is not a word of Moses, nor of the wonder-working rod that he stretched over the sea; he speaks only of the mighty acts of the Lord, whether in confounding and destroying His enemies, or in guiding and preserving His people. No, surely; man had nothing to do there, but to stand still, and sing the praise and glory, of the God of his salvation.

We cannot go through all the verses of this glorious hymn, but we must mark one thing. After speaking of the fear and dread, which should fall on all the neighbouring nations, when they heard of the mighty works the Lord had done for Israel, Moses goes on, "'Thou shalt bring them (thy people) in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.'" Do you observe that the land of Canaan, where the children of Israel were going, is spoken of as the Lord's own inheritance, the place which He had made for Himself to dwell in, and where He shall reign for ever and ever? You always think of the Lord as reigning in heaven, and looking down on this earth from His throne above; but there are many places in the Bible, which speak of

the Lord dwelling in the land of Canaan, and reigning on mount Zion. The prophet Isaiah looks forward to the time "when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem," Isaiah xxiv. 23; and Jeremiah says, "They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord," Jer. iii. 17; and Zechariah tells us that "all the nations of the earth shall go up to Jerusalem, to worship the king, the Lord of Hosts," Zech. xiv. 16, 17. Now, remember what Moses and the prophets say; and then think of what the angel of God said to Mary, when he came to tell her she should "bring forth a Son, and should call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 31, 32, 33.

The throne of David was on mount Zion, in Jerusalem; and there, we believe, the Lord Jesus Christ will reign, for He is the King of the Jews. He is gone away now, "to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return," Luke xix. 12; and by and by, He will come back and claim His inheritance, the world which He bought with His blood; and He will reign over the new earth in "Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King," Matt. v. 35. Now see, brethren; why should Moses have spoken of the Lord reigning in the land of Israel,



in the very hymn where he gives glory to God, for having drowned all their enemies in the Red Sea? Because the Lord's enemies, the disobedient and rebellious, are to be destroyed before He sits down on the throne of David; and this teaches us, that this great and solemn event of the drowning of the Egyptians was written down, not only that we may know that it once happened, but to shew beforehand what shall be again.

All those who are living in disobedience to God, shall be destroyed with an awful and sudden destruction, as the Egyptians were, when the Lord came in judgement. All night long the Egyptians were striving to overtake and punish the Lord's people, but they were all drowned when the morning appeared; while the Israelites were safe on the opposite shore. During this world's night time, the ungodly and unbelieving, have been living in defiance of God's laws, and persecuting and disturbing His people; but when the morning breaks, when the great day of His coming shall appear, then shall sudden destruction overtake them, and they shall not escape; while all believers shall be safe with their Lord.

My brethren, this is no fancy. You have seen the children of Israel standing on the sea-shore, beholding the solemn sight of the dead bodies of the Egyptians before their eyes, and singing praise and glory to God, who had delivered His people and destroyed their enemies; and it is written in

the very end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, that after the awful judgments on them that obeyed not God, His own people were seen standing on the glassy sea, "having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses the servant of God, (the song you have just heard) and the song of the Lamb," Rev. xv. 2, 3 : giving glory and praise to the Lord God Almighty, for having avenged His cause on His enemies, and delivered His ransomed people from all their sufferings.

My friends, there is only time now, to point out what this part of Israel's history teaches us. We are to look deeper than the facts themselves. The coming of God's people out of Egypt through the Red Sea, has a spiritual meaning: it is a picture of what believers go through, before they get to heaven. They are brought out of the bondage of sin, and made new creatures, free men, by the mighty power of God's Spirit; and in their passage through life, they get into many a difficulty, and many a trial; they are surrounded by enemies; an enticing world, a deceiving devil, and their own weak and sinful hearts; which are all as dangerous to them, and as impossible to overcome by their own strength, as the wilderness, and the Egyptians, and the Red Sea, were to the children of Israel.

But Christians have a Guide and Helper, as they had. The Saviour who led Israel by the cloudy Pillar, guides them by His holy Word, and by His indwelling Spirit; and they walk by faith

through the dark and rough paths of this world, looking up to Jesus; just as Israel went through the sea, guided by the light of fire. And when the morning comes, their Lord will come with it, and take all His own to Himself, and they will by and by, see the enemies that distressed them, sin and death, made an end of for ever. Their night of weeping is over and gone, and their morning of joy has dawned, never to set again!


Brethren, the Saviour is still calling you all, to rise and follow Him. Oh go; and He will never leave you till you are safe in heaven.



## EXODUS XV. XVI

**WHEN** Moses, followed by the sons of Israel, raised the voice of thanksgiving to the Lord, in the grand hymn, you remember we read last Sunday; the women did not stand still and silent. Led by Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, they took up the chorus, and joined in the glorious song: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Surely never has such an anthem been sung on earth: the voices of a whole people, blending together in one triumphant burst of praise! How indeed could they have kept silence, when they remembered that their God had "saved them out of the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy"? When "they saw that the waters covered their enemies, that



there was not one of them left : then believed they His word ; they sang His praise."

They saw that the Lord was as good as His word, when they thought on the mighty deliverance He had wrought out for His people ; and they feared, when they beheld His judgments on their enemies.

The passing on dry land through the Red Sea, was a thing that could never be forgotten in the history of Israel. We often find it spoken of long after, in the Psalms, and by the prophets too. The holy men of old, were never tired of telling what the Lord had done for His people. How strange it seems, that the very men themselves, whose eyes had seen it, and whose tongues had been loud in giving praise to the Lord, for the wonders He had wrought, should so soon have forgotten His works, and provoked Him by their unbelieving murmurs ! We read, " So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea ; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur ; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water."

Moses' *bringing the people*, looks as if they hadn't been very willing to leave the sea-shore, where they found plenty of spoil washed up by the waves. They gleaned a rich harvest by stripping the dead bodies of the Egyptian soldiers, of their armour and costly ornaments. The Israelites would in that way, get plenty of weapons of war, which they could learn to use, and so become fit to meet any

enemy they might fall in with, among the roving tribes of the desert. But at last, Moses gets them away from spoiling the Egyptians. They march for three days to the southward, but without finding any water to drink. The desert of Shur was a dry and thirsty land, very scantily supplied with springs; and when we think of the many thousands, who were gasping and choking from want of water, we can feel for their bitter disappointment, when, after three hot and weary days, they reached Marah: "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah," which means bitterness. It was bitter indeed. To rush to the spring, fling themselves down to bathe the burning brow, and cool their parched lips in the clear water, and then find that, thirsty though they were, it was perfectly undrinkable! No doubt it was a hard trial; but had they not just been brought on dry land through the midst of the sea? and ought they to have forgotten their God so soon, and murmured against His servant Moses? But a mob never reflects, and never reasons. Why did they not cry to the Lord? Surely He had not brought them out of Egypt in such a wonderful way, only to kill them with thirst in the desert! It is painful to see how much more natural it was to the children of Israel, to find fault with their kind and patient leader, and lay the blame on Moses, when anything went wrong



with them, than to humble themselves before God, and ask Him to help. They surely were a faithless, ungrateful race. They did little else than murmur,—while Moses prayed. He had troubles enough to try the temper and patience of any man; but he knew where to take them; and while the people grumbled and found fault with him, he went to his God: and clearly Moses did the better thing. “And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.”

Now mark, brethren, how ready the Lord was to hear and answer the prayer of His servant. He patiently bore with the provoking and senseless crowd, and took no notice of their faithless complaints; but the moment Moses looked up to Him, and cried for help, that moment the Lord gave a gracious answer. And so He does still. Oh, what patience, what forbearance our God shews towards our backslidings and our shortcomings, seeming not to notice all we do amiss; but we cannot breathe a real prayer, we cannot look up to Him with a beseeching eye, that He does not mark it, and is sure to give the help we need! The Lord shewed Himself, as loving, and kind, and patient, to the children of Israel in the wilderness, as He did afterwards, when He came down to

live among men, and bore with the infirmities, and pardoned the sins, and graciously accepted the poor services of His followers; and as He does now up in heaven, whence He bends down looks of love and pity on His wandering ones, hearing their faintest cry, bringing them back to the right way, and "saving them out of their distresses," Ps. cvii. 19.

Now observe *how* the Lord helped Moses. Did He just by a word of His mouth, command the bitter waters to become sweet, that His people might drink? (and the water would have obeyed if he had). No, but He ordered Moses to use certain means. He was to cut branches off a tree which the Lord pointed out to him, and throw them into the spring, when the waters directly lost all their bitterness, and became sweet and pleasant. Perhaps Moses, who had just seen the deep divide, and the rushing waters stand up like solid walls, when he stretched the rod of God over it, he maybe expected that something of the kind would happen now, and that he should be told, to stretch the rod over the bitter stream to make it sweet; but the Lord would teach His servant not to look for *miracles*, when *means* will do. The sea was made dry land, because there was no other way for the people to escape, and they could do nothing for themselves; but here, there was a way of sweetening the water, and Moses was told how to use it. And, brethren, that is our God's ordi-

nary way of working. He blesses His people in the proper use of means. He does not convert our souls by miracles, but He blesses some means of grace to us. And you must remember that these usual means, reading and hearing the Word, listening to the preached gospel, are just what God's Spirit makes them to you ; you are not to content yourselves with using them, but must diligently seek His blessing with them, or they will do you no good. That tree had likely no healing virtue of its own ; but because the Lord commanded it to be used, His blessing went with it, as it does with His own ordinances, when we use them rightly. And may not that pleasant tree, that sweetener of the bitter waters, be a foreshadowing of Him, who, "as a tender Plant," "a Root out of a dry ground," Isa. liii. 2, was cast into the bitter waters of death, and took away all their bitterness for His people, leaving sweet peace instead, for their sinking hearts ; and who, by and by, as the "Branch of righteousness," Jer. xxxiii. 15, the "Plant of Renown," Ezek. xxxix. 13, "the Tree of life," shall gather all His ransomed ones under His shadow ; while His "leaves shall be for the healing of the nations," Rev. xxii. 2.

My friends, most of us know what trial is. Few of us get very far on life's journey, without coming to many a "Marah," many a well of bitterness, where our fondest hopes have been deceived, our most anxious desires disappointed ; and when we

have found things in ourselves, that have given us many a taste of pain and sorrow; but let us remember, that the bitterest draught will be a wholesome one, if we receive it from the healing hand of the Good Physician. There can be no trial so painful, no grief so bitter, but it is soothed and sweetened, when the loving, sympathising Saviour takes part in it. He knew and cared for His people's sorrow, when He "came down to deliver them," chap. iii. 7, 8. After the healing of the bitter waters of Marah, the Lord made for the children of Israel a statute, that is, He gave them a law. It is written: "There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Though the Israelites were no longer slaves, they were not to be wanderers without a master, but were to look on themselves as subjects and servants to the Lord, as their King; and they are now told on what terms, the Lord will make an agreement with them, as His own people. From them, He asks only one thing, and that is obedience; while He engages on His part, to keep them in health, to let none of the terrible diseases come near them, which they must re-

member with horror and dread, in the land of Egypt, And God signs the agreement, as it were, with a new name, "The Lord that healeth thee." He is truly the God of our health. We think little enough about it, my friends ; but it is none the less true, that every morning you rise in health, able to go about your daily work, you owe to the preserving care of the Lord the Healer, as well as every time that you are raised up from a sick-bed. Oh, should we not oftener lift up our hearts in thankfulness, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases" ? Ps. ciii. 2, 3. Do you notice that the pardon of sin, is mentioned as the first of the Lord's benefits ? That is because sin is the worst disease ; the root of all our misery and all our pain, and it was to heal our souls, sick from the effects of sin, that Jesus came to die. When He lived on earth, He saw sin and misery on all sides : wherever He went, the sick and the suffering were brought to Him, and He cured all their diseases, and all their plagues, whether of body or mind : He but spoke the word, and the dying were raised up, and the dead lived again : He shewed Himself to be indeed the Lord the Healer. But there was more still : He who gave health to the suffering body, and vigour to the crippled limbs, could also cure the soul ; for He came to bind up the broken heart, to heal the wounded spirit, "to comfort all that

mourn." He came to give peace to the troubled conscience, and to say to every trembling penitent, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven." Ah, my friends, only trust yourselves to the Saviour; you will find there is no sorrow, no sore heart, that His love cannot heal; there is no sin so black that His blood cannot wash it away. He is "the Lord that healeth us"!

We read next that "They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." The wells in the wilderness, were not all wells of bitterness. This was one of those bright and beautiful spots, that travellers in the desert meet with, where a spring of water makes everything green around it, and prepares a cool and pleasant resting-place for the weary and thirsty wayfarer. So, my brethren, our life in this wilderness world, is not all sadness and sorrow; how many bright and sunny spots we come to; how many blessings are given to cheer us on our way, and to comfort us after some sore and bitter affliction! Shewing that our gracious Father is watching over His children, not letting them have too much of the bitter, and none of the sweet; but guiding them in the best way, and giving them just what they need, if not all they would choose; and gently leading them, step by step, all through their pilgrim days, to the rest of their promised home.

The children of Israel stayed some time, at the green and shady resting-place where the Pillar of cloud led them. There was a good supply of water, twelve wells, one for each tribe; and a grove of palm trees, casting a light but refreshing shadow on the ground, where Moses and Aaron, no doubt, often sat with the elders of Israel, talking together of the wonderful works of the Lord, which they had seen since their wandering life began. And surely that palm grove often resounded with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, when night fell, and their camp was lighted up by the glowing Pillar, which shone out in the darkness, and made the people feel that their God was in the midst of them! It seems so strange, that with that grand and awful Presence beside them, the children of Israel should ever dare to murmur; but we read directly, that soon after leaving their last encampment, they were complaining loudly, that they had nothing to eat. They must have just come to the end of the month's provision which they had brought out of Egypt; and instead of crying to the Lord to help them, as they were well warranted to do, by what He had done for them already, "The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full! for ye have

brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Was there ever such wickedness and folly? They fly out into passionate and senseless complaining; abusing their leaders for having brought them out of Egypt, and declaring that it would have been far better, if the Lord had made an end of them all there, where they were well fed, and didn't know what hunger was. Poor craven wretches! They have forgotten all about the bricks, and the stubble, and the furnaces, and the taskmaster's lash, and only think of the flesh-pots and the fulness of bread. What a long training it will take, to make them into any thing but selfish, mean-spirited slaves. Only to think of their sighing and crying after the flesh-pots of Egypt, when they were breathing the free air of the desert, under the care of the God of their fathers! See, brethren, what fools men make of themselves, when they get into a passion, and speak without thinking. If the children of Israel had thought for one minute, they could never have spoken such foolish and sinful words. They would have seen directly, that if the Lord had meant ill by them, He had no need to bring them into the desert to starve them with hunger. If He had meant to kill them, there were the swords of Pharaoh's army, or the waves of the Red Sea, ready to do His bidding, and make a quick end of the thankless people, who had no trust in their God, but were always murmuring



against Him, forgetting the wonders that He had shewed them, and provoking Him by their ungrateful unbelief; as they did ten times over, before they got out of the wilderness.

The Israelites knew that the Lord had promised to bring them into the land of Canaan; nay, they saw His presence in the midst of them, guiding and sheltering their host by day, and shining through the darkness of night: yet, no sooner have they eaten their last unleavened cake, and don't see where the next meal is to come from, than they shew plainly what dull, low, earthly-minded slaves they are; thinking of nothing but what they are to eat and drink, and never raising one look upwards,—never one hopeful trusting glance towards their God, who had redeemed them.

Brethren, it was God, the Holy Spirit, who drew this picture of the children of Israel. Do you believe that He meant it to be a likeness of Christian people? Can it be possible, think you, that God's children are no better than those rebellious Israelites? Let us see. Only try to remember how many mercies they receive every day, not to speak of the greatest of all, the pardon of sin; the being taken into God's own family, and having a heavenly home to look to. They think little enough where their daily blessings come from, yet no sooner is one taken away, than they begin to murmur, and to think that God is dealing hardly with them; they forget His daily and long-continued goodness, to fret

over some little trial, to mourn over some perhaps trifling loss, which, after all, was only sent to try them, and do them good. Are not Christians like the children of Israel in all that? Yes, my brethren, but how unlike to Him who left us “an example that we should follow in His steps!” 1 Peter ii. 21. When He was left for forty days in the wilderness, exposed to fierce temptations, in loneliness and hunger, did He lose His trust in His Father, and murmur and complain that His God had forgotten Him, because He suffered such things? Ah, no! On the contrary, He waited in patience and prayer, and would receive nothing that His Father did not give Him; for He remembered God’s words written by Moses, that “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” Deut. viii. 3: and to do His Father’s will at all times, was more than meat and drink to Him. Would that Christians tried more earnestly to follow in the Saviour’s steps!

We read again, how patiently the Lord bore with the faithless ingratitude of Israel. Instead of punishing; He promises to supply their wants. He knew that His people had need of daily food, and He “said unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth

day they shall prepare that which they bring in ; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." There was no way for themselves, to provide food for so vast a multitude in the wilderness, so the Lord will send them daily bread from heaven. In the gathering of this heavenly bread, there was to be a constant trial of the people's faith and obedience ; they were to learn the reverence and respect, due to the Sabbath of rest.

In this chapter, is the first mention of keeping the Sabbath-day ; though we believe that it had always been observed among the sons of God, ever since the Lord had blessed the Sabbath-day, when He rested on it, from His work in making the world.

We noticed in the book of Genesis, that Noah did not forget the seventh day in the Ark ; and we cannot but believe that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob kept the Sabbath themselves, and taught their children and their households to keep it. But while the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt, they must have got out of the good habit, and the keeping of the holy Sabbath had fallen out of use. But now they are a redeemed people ; no longer slaves, but the Lord's freemen ; and they are to have their birthright again, the precious gift of the holy day of rest, which was given to man by his gracious God. The people are to prepare for the rest of the Sabbath, by gathering and making ready, a double portion of

food on the day before, so that no needless work might be done on the seventh ; and by the way they observed that command, could be seen whether they had faith enough, to depend on the Lord's providing for the wants of that day, without their working. The holy Sabbath was to be a continual reminder to men, that they had souls to be fed, as well as bodies ; and that while six days were given to provide for their bodily wants, the seventh was to be kept for the Lord's service. Nothing but work that was absolutely necessary, was to be done ; it was the day when their souls, their better part, were to be specially cared for, and nourished by God's word, and by attending on such means of grace, as He had provided for them.

We find afterwards in the history of Israel, that their condition as a nation, depended mainly on the way the Sabbath was kept among them : as long as they hallowed it as God commanded, He kept them in peace and prosperity ; but whenever they forsook the law of the Lord, and broke the Sabbaths ; seeking nothing but their own pleasure on His holy day, punishment surely followed ; and they had to learn by long and bitter experience, what an evil thing it was, to forsake their own mercies, and to despise the good gifts of their God.

My brethren, let me ask, What *do you* think of the Sunday ? You value it, no doubt, and would be sorry to give it up, but did you ever think *why*

you value it? Is it because it is a day of rest from the week's toil? a day when you may enjoy yourselves in sight-seeing, or visiting your friends? or is it as a convenient day for winding up matters of business, casting up accounts, or writing letters that you hadn't time for through the week? Are such as these, the reasons why you prize the Sunday? But, my friends, that would be making Sunday your own day: you may do all such things without once thinking of God, who gave it, and who calls it holy. Ah then, the blessed day can't have been given, to be spent like that. It is the day on which Jesus rose from the grave, and gained the victory over death and hell, for His people; and surely it can't be rightly spent, unless some time be given to learning more about Him, how He loved our world, and gave Himself for us. The Lord's day was given to be a blessing, and a comfort, and a rest to men from their daily labour; but while using and enjoying it as such, they must remember that they have souls to be saved, and that some of the Sunday hours are to be spent in caring for them. Men should not rest on the Lord's day merely as their cattle do. They should strive to rest from worldly cares and anxieties—to rest from earthly thoughts—that they may try to think of heaven—shewing to their families how much they value it, as a time of sacred leisure from the cares of the week, and winning them to go together to the house of God,

where they may join in prayer and praise, and in listening to the holy Book, which tells how God loved poor sinful man. My friends, if the Sunday be a day of holy rest, and innocent enjoyment to you, then you know well, what a blessed gift your Father has bestowed on you, and by and by you will think with joy, that there remains a day of rest for God's people in heaven, where there will be no night, and no sin, and no sorrow for ever !

“And Moses and Aaron said unto the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt. And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord ; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord ; and what are we, that ye murmur against us ? And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full ; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him : and what are we ? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.” The people, in their senseless and wicked grumbling, because they did not see where their meat was to come from, forgot who was their Leader ; and laid all the blame on Moses and Aaron, for having brought them away from Egypt, where there was plenty ; into the wilderness, where there was nothing to eat ; now they shall see, that it was the Lord Himself, who had led them out ; *they* shall know that all their sinful and foolish

murmuring was really against Him; for what were Moses and Aaron but the Lord's servants, who only did what they were commanded by their Master? Now they should see, that the same Almighty Hand, which brought them out of Egypt, could also feed them in the desert; and they were reminded that the Lord heard, and took notice of their ungrateful complaints, and was displeased that they should dare to murmur against Him.

“And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord; for he hath heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.” When the children of Israel looked towards the Pillar of cloud, they saw it lighted up with a glorious brightness, too dazzling for their sight; and they felt that they were standing in the presence of God. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.” What gracious words to the rebellious and ungrateful people! The Lord will shew them that He, who alone can give them bread and flesh in the wilderness, is the same mighty God, who brought them with a strong hand

out of the land of their bondage, that they be no more faithless, but believing. “And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp.” Immense bevies of quails, birds like small plump partridges, came in such abundance as to cover the ground all about the encampment; so that when the people went out and picked them up, there was an ample supply of the most delicate meat for them all. “And in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost, on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was.” They were astonished at the sight; all the time they had been in the desert, they had never seen anything like it before: they look curiously at the small white grains, and say to one another, What is it? Now, in the Hebrew tongue, which the people spoke, these three little words sound like manna (*Man-hu*), and so their food came to be called manna.

“And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.” Here we have the first mention of the wonderful provision that the Lord made for His people, during forty years in the wilderness. This manna is so remarkable in itself, and is so often spoken of in the Bible, and by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and

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is so clear and beautiful a figure of Him, that we must take pains to learn the lessons it teaches.

You know, brethren, that man was made from the dust of the earth, and that the food for the daily nourishment of his body, comes for him out of the ground; but that is not enough for him. "Man doth not live by bread alone," because he has a soul as well as a body, and he needs the Word of God to nourish that soul.

Now, as the children of Israel were here a figure of the church of Christ, that is, all true believers, and were fed all through their wanderings in the wilderness with manna, which fell with the dew from the sky, and did not belong to the earth at all; it shews, that as *their* natural life was supported by food from heaven, so the spiritual life, the well-being of the soul, in the true Christian, must be supported by the true manna; the "bread from heaven;" the life-giving Word; the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst; whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood (that is, whoever believes in me as his Saviour), hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 35, 54. That day is coming for us all. Think what it would be to know that the coming Judge, is the Saviour we have long known and loved! Think what it would be, to see Him turn with a bright and gracious smile, and say,

- “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”! Ah, go and trust in Him now, and that joy will be yours for ever!

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## EXODUS XVI. XVII.

**WE** left the children of Israel in great surprise, when, on leaving their tents in the morning, they saw the ground all covered, with what looked like white rime. It had fallen at night with the dew, gently and softly from the clouds, but did not, like the dew, go away when the sun rose. It lay in rich abundance round about, and was within the reach of all the people. "And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for those which are in his tent." This was the provision, that the Lord supplied with a bountiful hand for the people's wants, all through their wilderness days, and He commanded them to gather it, for the food of their households. A certain measure, just what was sufficient for each one, an omer per head, was to be brought in every day, and it was to be all used the same day.

“And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.”

The manna gathering, was to be a continued trial of their faith and obedience; if they did not bring it in as they were desired, they lost their food for the day, as no one had any to spare for his neighbour. It was to be gathered early, soon after sunrise, before the heat melted it away: “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.” The Israelites remembered that the Lord had commanded them to gather a double portion of manna on the sixth day, which they did; and perhaps that shews, that though the holy Sabbath had not yet been named by Moses, they had some idea, that it had once been the custom of their fathers, according to the law of their God; so the notion of a weekly day of rest, was not strange to them.

But the rulers seem to have been anxious lest the people should be doing wrong; and the manna should spoil and corrupt, as it had done before, when some of it had been left till the next day; and they come and tell Moses what the people

were doing. But Moses shewed them that it would be quite different, when the manna was gathered in obedience to God's command: "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein." It was plain to every one, that his daily bread was sent by God's hand, when it neither came on the Sabbath day, nor spoiled, when it was kept for it: "And Moses said, Eat that to-day: for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." But some of the people didn't believe it would be so, and they went out on the Sabbath day, in spite of Moses' warning. Maybe they had only brought in *one* portion on the sixth day: and if so, they were rightly punished, by having to go without food on the Sabbath. "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none." The Lord was displeased with their disobedience, and He "said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore

He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

The children of Israel are now obliged to keep the law of their God. They have to depend on Him for their daily bread, and He shews them that He will have the Sabbath day to be honoured: and they shall have no excuse for breaking it, by having to go out and gather in their day's provisions. And then we have a description of what the manna was like. In the Psalms it is called "angels' food," and "corn of heaven," Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25, to shew that it was not an earthly thing at all, but a continued miracle from God's hand. "And the children of Israel called the name thereof manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Moses tells us afterwards that "the people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it," Num. xi. 8. And that Israel might never forget, how the Lord had fed their fathers in the wilderness, when they were come into the land of Canaan with its milk and honey, and abundance of good things; "Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from

the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony to be kept." And St Paul tells us that "the golden pot that had manna," Heb. ix. 4, was one of the things that were kept in the ark of the covenant, in the house of God. This bountiful supply was not for a month, or a year, but it lasted all through the journeyings in the wilderness ; in spite of the people's ingratitude, and their frequent grumbling that they hadn't the savoury fare ; the fish, and onions, and leeks, and melons, that they had been used to in Egypt, instead. We read that "the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited : they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan."

Now, brethren, we have gone over in this chapter, all that is said about the manna ; and we must go back and consider it a little, for it is full of teaching. We must not think that all this has been written down, under the direction of God the Holy Spirit, only that we may know what the children of Israel had to eat in the wilderness. If the manna had been nothing more, than a miraculous supply of food, to keep them alive, when they must have been starved without it, it would hardly matter to us, to know much about it ; but it had a far higher meaning.

The manna in the wilderness, was to teach Christians about the Life of their souls, the Lord Jesus Christ, the life-giving Bread from heaven.

Holy Spirit, we pray Thee, guide us to find Him in the manna, and nourish our souls with the bread of life !

First, the manna came down from heaven, sent from God; and it came in the night : The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . The Father hath sent me." He came down to this earth in the world's night-time, at a time when the darkness of sin covered all the world ; and we know that it is very dark in a man's soul, till he learn to know Jesus, the Light of life.

The manna lay on the ground, small, and round, and white, and sweet : Jesus, the Son of God Most High, took our earthly nature, lowly and humble ; born of a woman, yet from all eternity, without beginning or end ; pure and spotless in His holiness, and sweet in His saving grace : the word that speaks of Him, is sweeter than honey to the taste ; and His very name is sweet music "in a believer's ear." The manna was gathered morning by morning, for the daily food of the people : Jesus is the constant nourishment of the believing soul ; and they thrive best, who seek Him early and daily. The manna was gathered early, ere the sun was hot : so every day, should begin with Jesus. That day is the best, that life is the most blessed, where



the waking thoughts, the fresh youthful heart and desires, have been given to Him. Each man gathered just manna enough for his food during the day; he was not to lay it up for the morrow, but was to lie down at night, knowing that he had not a bit of bread in the house, and trusting in God, to send him a new supply, for the new day. So the believer who knows the most of his Saviour's love and grace, feels that he is always wanting more; he cannot live, as it were, on the old store, because he longs to grow, to grow day by day, in the knowledge and in the love of Jesus.

“He that gathered much of the manna, had nothing over; and he that gathered little, had no lack.” He who has most grace, will find that he needs it all; he has nothing to spare. It needed all that Christ could do, to save him; while the poor sinner who flees to the sheltering Saviour, at the last moment, and cries, “Lord, remember me,” will find that it was enough, to touch even the hem of His garment. The least grain of true faith saves the soul, for it brings it to rest on Jesus. And the manna was food for all; it nourished the young, the old, the strong, the tender, all alike; nothing else was wanted: so is Jesus, the Bread from heaven, exactly the needed nourishment for every believing soul; and He is all that it needs. All that will may come, and they will find that His death has put away their curse, His


blood has washed away their sins, His perfect obedience has opened heaven to them, and His Spirit guides them there. Whether young or old, or rich or poor, or strong or feeble, they are all alike in one thing—they are all sinners, and each one finds Jesus, to be the very Saviour he needs. The young are drawn to Him, who so gently and tenderly feels for their longings after happiness, and wins them from a disappointing world, to find their joy in His love,—the tempted and struggling find that He feels for them ; He raises them when they fall, and gives them new strength, so that they are enabled to run the race, and fight the battle of life, looking up to Him ; and at last are more than conquerors over sin and the grave, through Him that loved them,—while to the suffering and bereaved, Jesus makes Himself known as the “Brother born for adversity,” Prov. xvii. 17 ; “the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” Prov. xviii. 24 ; who draws near to the sorrowing heart, and whispers with tender sympathy, “Weep not, for I am with thee.” Am not I better to thee than all thou hast lost?—and by the deathbed of God’s saints, when the senses are failing fast, and the dull ear is closing to the voices most loved on earth, it has been seen that the dim eye brightened at the sound of the blessed Name, and the dying lips tried once again, to falter “Jesus.” Yes, surely,—He is all in all to His people,—“Their Guide through life, their Comfort

in death, and their everlasting Joy.” “Lord, evermore give us this Bread !”

And another thing. The manna came down from God’s open hand, and all might gather freely; rich and poor, all fared alike, for it came down like the rain and the sunshine, “on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust.” Matt. v. 45. What a picture of God’s free salvation ! Open to all, not to be purchased by any. Hear how destitute sinners are invited, to accept the richest Gift that God Almighty has to offer : “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price,” Isa. lv. 1. Jesus says, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,” John vi. 51 ; and the Spirit cries, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. xxii. 17. The manna lasted all through the wilderness journeying. For forty years the Lord rained it down upon the children of Israel for their daily food. In spite of all their provoking ways, and their “bad manners,” God remembered His promise to their fathers ; He nourished them, and “satisfied them with the bread of heaven,” Ps. cv. 40, till they came to the borders of the land of Canaan : so the Lord Jesus Christ, “the true Bread from heaven,” John vi. 32, is the strength and support of His people all their lives ; those whom He loves, He loves to the end,

He pardons all their sins, and recovers them from their backsliding,—He strengthens them by His grace, and feeds them by his word,—He makes them holy by His Spirit, and blesses them by His love, in every step of their journey through life,—and when they come to the end, and have only death between them and heaven, He bends over their dying beds, cheering their fainting hearts, and lighting up the dark valley by His blessed presence, till they reach the heavenly Canaan, the land of their inheritance. And if the wilderness provision be so strengthening and so sweet, what will it be to enjoy Him in His fulness, in the kingdom of God ?

Again. The manna was pure and wholesome food, but it had no power to keep off death. “With many of them (who ate it) God was not well pleased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness,” 1 Cor. x. 5. Now in this, it was not like the true Bread from heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews one day, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead ;” and then He added, “I am the living Bread which came down from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever,” John vi. 49, 51 ; “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day,” John vi. 54. The Lord had explained to them before, that eating and drinking His flesh and blood, meant coming to Him, and trusting in



Him as the Saviour. Ah, mind, brethren, that there is no way of having life for ever, but by believing in Jesus.

We must notice one thing more, and it is this. Though the manna came down in rich abundance from the sky, as free to all the children of Israel as the sun or the rain, yet it didn't drop into their mouths, without any trouble or pains on their part. They had to get up early in the morning and gather it, and then grind it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and bake it in pans to prepare it for use; and what was not gathered did not stay, but melted, and was drawn up to the clouds again. Now is that not to teach us, that our God has provided us richly with heavenly blessings; but if we just sit still, and don't use them, they will do us no good, and may be taken from us? For example, you have the holy Bible in your houses, but if you don't read it, and pray for God's teaching, that you may walk by it; it will be worse than useless to you, it will make you more inexcusable and guilty at the last day. You have God's house, and all his appointed means of grace beside you, but if you don't attend them, and seek His blessing with them, it will one day be worse for you, than if Christian England, as it is called, had been a heathen land. The Saviour has come; He has borne the sins of men, and died to save them; He paid their debt, and opened a free way to heaven; He loves poor sinners, and has done

everything needful for their salvation,—and why are so many men and women not saved? The Lord Jesus gives the reason, “Ye will not come unto me.” Do you notice, He doesn’t say, “Ye *cannot*?” Yes, brethren, men and women will have only themselves to blame, if they are ruined at last; because when God had gone more than half way to meet them, they would not take one step towards Him—when He had done so much for them, they would do nothing for themselves. Look here now. Whose fault would it have been, if any of the Israelites had been starved to death with hunger, when the manna was lying thick round about the camp? You say, their own, of course: for there was plenty of food lying at their very doors, and they wouldn’t take the trouble to go and gather it. Was the bread from heaven to have been put into their mouths whether they wanted it or no? Surely not. And my brethren, God forces His salvation on no man. He will not *make* any of you go to Him and be saved, if you don’t choose it. He will save none of you against your will. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews, about the great supper that was provided for the marriage of the king’s son, and many people were invited to come to it? That none of them went, but all made excuses: they had their own business to attend to, their own pleasure to seek. Then what happened? Did the master send out another message, and

make them all go whether they would or not? No, that he did not. He had others put in their places, and said in his just displeasure, "None of those men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper." Luke xiv. 24.

Now, dear friends, give heed, I beg of you. The King asks you all, to go and share the good things which He has provided. He offers you His own Son for your Saviour; and with Him, you get the pardon of your sins, and the Holy Spirit to make your hearts new and clean. He gives you grace now, to walk as God's children, so long as you live in this world; and glory, by and by, when you come to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Are these things not worth striving for? Mind, that though you can't win them by any works or doings of your own, for they are in God's gift, yet He will not bestow them on any but those who love His Son, and try hard to please Him, by living Christian lives down here. Oh, pray to the Lord Jesus to give you His Holy Spirit, that you may hear the King say to you all that day, "Well done, good and faithful servants: enter ye into the joy of your Lord"!

We read again, "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with

Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink." How strange it seems that the people should have been troubled for one moment, because there was no water at their halting-place! When they knew that their bread came every morning from the Lord's storehouse, surely it wasn't much to believe that He would send water too! But they were an unbelieving, rebellious race; it was much more natural to them to find fault, and quarrel with Moses, than to lay their wants before the Lord and to ask His help; so now, with angry words, they call upon Moses to give them water to drink. The stupid, low-minded people, would not learn to look higher than the rod in their leader's hand. They had seen the tremendous plagues in Egypt,—they had seen the deep waters of the Red Sea, divide and stand up in a heap on either side, to leave a dry path for them,—they had seen the waves return and cover their enemies, when Moses stretched the rod over the sea,—they had tasted the bitter spring, sweetened by the branch, cast in by the hand of Moses,—and they have now lost sight of the Lord altogether, and look to their leader, to do everything for them, as if he had been their redeemer, and not merely the servant, who only did what his Lord commanded him. The children of Israel shewed very plainly that "they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the



doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven," Ps. lxxviii. 22, 23, 24. "And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" The people's sin was against the Lord; they tempted Him, and provoked Him to punish them, by not acknowledging that He was among them; that all their blessings came from His hand, and that He was ready and willing to supply all their need. "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle, with thirst?"

Their angry impatience made the evil worse; their thirst became unbearable, and in their passion they turn furiously upon Moses, as if he was the cause of their sufferings, and demand why he had brought them from Egypt, that they might all die of thirst in the desert? Moses could do nothing with the unreasoning and furious mob, they wouldn't listen to a word he could say, while his very life was in danger, from their mad violence. He turned away from the fearful uproar, and cried unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

Moses had done nothing but good, to the children of Israel, and yet in their senseless passion, they were ready to take his life. And was it not so

long after when a Greater than Moses came, and did many good works among the Jews of His time ? “ They took up stones to stone Him,” and He who came down to save the lost, who went about among the people continually doing them good, and speaking to them as “ never man spake ;” He, the loving compassionate Son of God, was often obliged to escape from their murderous hands, till the time should come to lay down His life ! We see that in his treatment by the Jews, as well as in many other things, Moses was a striking type of Jesus.

We are ready to wonder at the children of Israel, and to think that they were sinners above all men, because they behaved so very ill, and were so rebellious and unbelieving : they were surely bad enough, but, my brethren, we may look nearer home. Don’t we see every day, that men will take up with any notions, and trust in any inventions, and look up to any teachers, rather than believe what God has said in His word, and trust in His way of salvation ? And how apt we all are, to try and get out of troubles and difficulties, by some way of our own devising, by any means, rather than lay them before our God, and humbly ask His help !

It was the long wandering in the wilderness, that shewed what the children of Israel really were ; every difficulty, and every trial, brought out their true character. And their life in the desert, was very like ours in the world ; we are no better than

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they were, until we are changed, and made new creatures by the Spirit of God.

But if he have a hard task in managing the ungovernable people, Moses has deep comfort and blessing in his God. He finds the Lord always near, ready to listen, and to help him in his many distresses. He had no sooner laid the case before Him, than, as we read, "The Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel ; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb ; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Now, my brethren, you find that we cannot take one step through the wilderness without meeting with Jesus. Here He is before us as the Rock. When St Paul was telling the Christians of Corinth, what had happened to his fathers in the wilderness, speaking of the rock which gave them water, he says, "that rock was Christ." Now give heed, and you will see what a suitable thing a rock is, to represent our Saviour.

A rock gives us the notion of enduring strength. "As firm as a rock," we say, when we speak of something that cannot be shaken ; and he who would build his house securely, must lay its foundation on a rock. Then the winds may blow, and the storms may rage, and the waves may

dash against it, and it cannot fall, for it is founded on a rock. The rock in the wilderness was Christ, He is the Lord in His everlasting strength, "the Rock of Ages." And he who desires to be saved, must build his trust and confidence on Him, and no power on earth can shake him, he is safe for ever. All the weight of a world's sin, was laid, a crushing load on Jesus, and bore Him down to the grave ; but it could not overwhelm the Rock of our refuge ; He rose again. And all the waves and billows of God's holy anger against sin, rolled over our sinless Redeemer ; but He rose above them all, and stood triumphant, as the rock of our strength. All that the rage, and malice, and hatred, and power of the evil one, could do against Him, was done ; but Satan's devilish attempts only recoiled on his own head, and one day he shall know what he has gained, by dashing himself against the Rock of man's salvation. Oh, shall not saved sinners cry with joyful voice, our God "is the rock, his work is perfect ; for all his ways are judgment : a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he" ? Deut. xxxii. 4.

Now, look at the rock in the wilderness. The Lord God was above it, and Moses was commanded to strike it with the rod, and water should come out that the people might drink. Jesus, who was God's equal, took on Him the nature of man, and "the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 7, and "was stricken, smitten of God,—bruised for our ini-

quities ; for the transgression of the people was he stricken, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii.

The rock in Horeb, stood there in its strength and majesty ; but the mere sight of it, gave no relief to the gasping, fainting people. What then ? It was smitten by God's command, and forthwith there came out bright, sparkling streams of cool refreshing water, and the people drank and lived : Jesus lived a long time on earth, in all the majesty of His spotless purity, and all the tenderness of His self-denying compassion ; but the Jews were no better for His presence, they did not believe in Him. What then ? He was nailed to the cross, and gave up His life ; and from His smitten side there came out blood and water ; the blood to shew His death, which took away our guilt ; and the water to shew the Holy Spirit, which that death procured for His people, to give them new hearts, and cleanse them from the love of sin. As we have just seen that the rock was a type of Jesus Himself, so in the water that flowed out when the rock was stricken, we have a type of the Spirit. And as the rock in the wilderness was smitten, before the water came out to revive the children of Israel ; so Jesus had to be smitten to death, before He could send down the gift of the Holy Spirit, the living water, to give new life to His people. Those who drank of the water from the rock in Horeb, thirsted again and again, and

died in the wilderness ; but the Lord Jesus Christ says, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life,” John iv. 14. “ And that spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive,” John vii. 39. And when the Spirit was sent down, soon after the Lord Jesus went back to heaven, thousands were turned to God in one day, some even of those who with wicked hands, had crucified the holy Saviour ; and sinners since, are saved every day, through the same blessed Spirit, leading them to trust in Jesus. My brethren, think what a precious gift that Holy Spirit must be, when our blessed Lord told His disciples, that it was better for them that He should go away, that the Comforter might come : for He would teach them all things, and dwell in them, and guide them into all truth. Pray—pray for the Holy Spirit, for “ if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,” Rom. viii. 9. He that has the Spirit, hates sin ; and those that are led by the Spirit, are sons of God, and heirs of heaven.

## EXODUS XVII.

**Y**OU remember that the Lord commanded Moses to strike the rock in the wilderness, and there came out a bountiful supply of water for the Israelites to drink.

But though the Lord supplied their need, He did not forget their sinful and rebellious murmurs against Him, and He would have the people remember too ; so names were given to the place, to be a continual reminder to them, of their wickedness in tempting the Lord. “And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not ?”

And now we read of something quite new in Israel's experience : their first battle. “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.” The people have something else to do now, than to quarrel and chide with Moses. They are properly punished for their strife and rebellion at home ; a real enemy is before them, and one who had an

old grudge against Israel ; for Amalek came from Esau, who, perhaps you remember, was Jacob's elder brother, who quarrelled with him on account of the birthright and blessing ; and though the brothers met again kindly, and parted for the last time as friends, there had always been hatred and ill-will between their families ; and we find that the children of Esau, or Edom, continued active enemies to the children of Israel, and never lost a chance of doing them hurt. Moses says afterwards, Num. xxiv. 20, " Amalek was the first of the nations " that warred against Israel ; and they fell upon them now, without any provocation ; for the people were merely passing through the desert, and neither eating any food, nor drinking from any wells of theirs. It seemed to have been the old hatred between the two races, that broke out this first opportunity and never slept afterwards.

But see now what command is given : " And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek : to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand." It was an anxious night for Israel, the eve of their first battle, for they are not now, to stand still and see the Lord fight for them ; they are to go out against their enemies themselves, and fight their own battles : while Moses would stand on the hill top, where they could all see him, and hold the rod of God in his hand, to encourage the soldiers, and remind them to put their trust in



Him who had brought them through so many dangers. The children of Israel are now well provided with weapons of war, from the spoils of the dead Egyptians, and have probably learnt to use them; but they will find before the day is done, that the victory is not to be gained by the swords of the soldiers, without the prayers of the servant of God. When Joshua (a young man who is spoken of here for the first time) had chosen out a body of men, and marched in battle array against the enemy, Moses, and Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill, and then—what a wonderful scene! Those who looked on the battlefield, might have seen that the real struggle was going on above, on the hill top; and that Israel's success waxed and waned just as Moses' hands were held up towards heaven in prayer, or fell down from weariness towards the earth: for we read that "it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." When Aaron and Hur saw that, in spite of the valour and generalship of Joshua, and the earnest efforts of his soldiers, their enemies always got the better, whenever Moses was obliged, from weariness, to let

his hands fall to his side, they got him a stone to sit on, and each took one of his hands, and held it up on either side, supporting them firmly in that position till sunset ; and by that time “ Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.” And then, to shew that this was not a thing to be forgotten, the Lord commanded Moses to write it down in a book, that it might be taken care of. This is the first time that we hear of the art of writing : it was to be made use of, to preserve the memory of the Lord’s goodness, to His chosen people ; and of His judgments on His enemies : “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua : for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” My brethren, it is a grand distinction of the holy Word of our God to be called “ the written word.” Nothing has been trusted to man’s fading memory ; all that is needful to salvation, has been written down by the Spirit of God, using the pens of different men, that we may have God’s Truth, to be read, and studied, and loved, as our guiding Light through the crooked paths, and the uncertain glimmer of this deceiving world, till it bring us safely to our Father’s house. Keep fast and loving hold of your Bible ; let nothing shake your dependence on its every word. There be many fools now-a-days, as there were long ago, Ps. xiv. 1, who think it is wise, and sensible, and clever to

doubt and disbelieve. There are men, alas ! even in high places, who misuse the faculties God has given them, by trying to weaken men's faith and simple trust—by casting doubts on His written Word. It is a cruel robbery of their poor fellow creatures, to destroy their belief in the Bible : and what have they to offer in exchange ? Nothing, absolutely nothing ; for, mind this, if the Word of God is not true, there is nothing true but man's misery ; and he has no Saviour. But, blessed be God, we believe and are sure, that the Bible is His truth ; in every part of it, the living word of the living God : and “ able to make us wise unto salvation,” 2 Tim. iii. 15. Oh seek His grace, that you may love it and live by it, more and more !

Now, brethren, I ask you to give good heed to this. Why should this story of Israel's first fight with the old enemies of their race, have been so carefully written down in a book, if it had not some very particular teaching for Christians ? St Paul says, that “ the things that were written aforetime were written for our learning,” Rom. xv. 4. Let us strive to attend, then, to what God has had written for us.

It is very plain, that when so large a part of the Bible is taken up with the history of God's dealings with the children of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and afterwards in the land of Canaan ; the Lord meant that history to teach spiritual truth to the Christian church, to the end of time.

And for that purpose, He makes use of the things that happened to His chosen people, which His servants were directed to write down, just as we use pictures to give children a right notion of things they never have seen, and never may see.

If you will turn to Ps. lxxviii., you will see that this is no fanciful idea. It is there written, "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us." Then comes the parable; and what is it? Just a particular account of the history of the children of Israel; of all the wonders that the Lord had wrought for them in Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, and of the sins and crimes of the people; and how their God, in His compassion, forgave their iniquity, and turned away His anger many a time, and brought them into the good land, that He had promised their fathers. So we see that the account of how all these things happened, is the parable or "earthly story," while the "heavenly meaning" belongs to God's people everywhere. We believe, that if afterwards, the nation of Israel represents Christendom, that is, all people who have been baptised, and call themselves Christians; the deliverance of the children of Israel from the cruel bondage of Egypt, shews the redemption of the church of God, from the misery and ruin of the fall, and from the bondage of sin and Satan. You have seen that the Israel-

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ites had nothing to do with that deliverance, but to take the benefit of it. It was all done for them. The Lord Himself was their deliverer. It was He who broke the chain of their slavery, and let His oppressed people go free. It was He who guided them by day and night, and opened a path for them through the midst of the sea, and brought back the rushing waters on their enemies, and drowned them every one. It was His bounteous hand which spread a daily table in the barren wilderness for His people, and caused the flinty rock to give out streams of sparkling water, that they might not thirst. It was their God alone who had done these things for them; Israel had only to stand still, and see the salvation, and enjoy the daily blessings He provided for them.

The spiritual meaning of all that is, that with the work of redemption, man has nothing to do but to believe in it. It was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He came, in the love and power of God, and in the nature and sympathies of holy man, to bear the curse, to pay the debt, and to redeem the lost world, by the sacrifice of Himself. And He did it all, and more besides. He brought many nations out of the darkness and misery of heathen ignorance and wickedness, into a state of light and liberty. He gave them His holy word, Christian privileges, and means of grace, just as He brought the children of Israel away from the brick kilns and furnaces of Egypt

into the free air of the wilderness, where he guided them by His presence, and fed them with "the corn of heaven." Now, do you see what is meant by the children of Israel being a picture, as it were, of us who are true Christians? We are in the same position in the world, spiritually, as they were in the desert, naturally. We did not redeem ourselves from the curse of sin, any more than they delivered themselves from the bondage of Egypt; and we did not bring ourselves out of heathen darkness, into a state of Christian light and liberty, any more than they made for themselves, a dry and safe path through the dark and stormy waters of the Red Sea, into the light and freedom of the wilderness. But the chosen people were not to dwell in the wilderness, it was but the road which lay between them and Canaan, as this world lies between the Christian and his home in heaven. They were called to pass through the wilderness on their way to the good land of promise, and they have many enemies to fight with, who try to hinder them from getting there. The first, as you have heard, were the Amalekites. Amalek himself was the grandson of Esau, that careless and "profane person," Heb. xii. 16, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he may very well represent the worldly spirit, "the fleshly lusts which war against the souls" of Christians, 1 Pet. ii. 11, and are more deadly enemies to them, than Amalek was to Israel, bitterly though he

hated the sons of Jacob. Perhaps the Amalekites came out to fight against Israel, because they wanted to get possession of the beautiful sparkling spring gushing in full streams from the dry and flinty rock, where no water had ever been seen before; and it surely was a prize worth fighting for, to dwellers in the hot and thirsty desert. Or, perhaps it was only the old grudge against Jacob's family, breaking out on the first occasion. However that might be, they came out in battle array, and Joshua is ordered to pick out a body of soldiers to fight against them. The Lord does not here fight for Israel, but He helps His people to fight for themselves. You all know how the battle ended, and that the victory was due, not so much to the bravery of the troops, as to the prayers of Moses.

Now my brethren, this battle between Israel and Amalek, teaches us a good deal about the struggle that goes on, with more or less violence, in the heart of every true Christian. So soon as a man is "born again," or converted to God by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the water flowing from the smitten rock was a type of, he has a new nature given to him, quite opposite to the old one he was born with. The new one teaches him to believe in Jesus, and to love his God and Saviour; desiring to please Him more than anything in the world, and to grow like Him; but then, the sins, and corruptions, and evil habits of his old nature,

start up in troops, and sorely hinder and keep him back, in running the Christian race. There is a continual fight going on in the man's heart, between the new nature implanted by God's Spirit, and the old one which was born with him; and sometimes his enemies seem as if they would get the better, for they are strong and cunning, always watching to set a trap for him, or take him in an unguarded moment, and give him a great fall; but there is a strong Helper in heaven, and prayer will bring Him down to His people's aid. St Paul knew well what the struggle is, that goes on in a Christian, between the new heart, and the old nature. All his life, he was warring with the evil that was in him, but though he knew he should gain the victory at last, the sins and corruptions still clinging to him were as horrible and abhorrent to his renewed spirit, as it would be dreadful and loathsome to a living man, to be bound to a dead body, and he cries out with a startling burst of feeling, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" but he immediately looks up, and adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vii. 24, 25; and long after, he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7: he knew the battle was nearly won, and the crown was in sight,—he was made "more than conqueror through Him that loved him," Rom. viii. 37.



We read next that "Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi, which means, the Lord my banner," in grateful memory of his presence and help. With the Lord on their side, the children of Israel had been able to beat their enemies. They knew it was not their own bravery, that had gained the battle over the Amalekites; it was because their God was helping them, and under His banner they had fought and conquered. Now mark this. As the children of Israel conquered the Amalekites by the Lord's help, so do Christians overcome their spiritual enemies by the help of Jesus, "the Captain of their salvation," Heb. ii. 10. "His banner over them is love," Song of Sol. ii. 4; they have only to keep close to Him, and His loving Spirit enables them by degrees to give up their sins, to rise above the world, and to "resist the devil," James iv. 7. They shall more than conquer them all, in the strength of Him, who overcame for His people. And Amalek should never be able to get the better of Israel in time to come, for the Lord looks on the enemies of His chosen people, as the enemies of Himself; and He swears, that because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord (His throne in Israel), "therefore the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation;" and we learn from the after history of Israel, how He commanded Saul, their first king, to destroy the Amalekites, saying, "I remember that which

Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not," 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3. Saul did not do as the Lord bid him, and lost his kingdom for his disobedience; but David, who came after him, made war on the Amalekites, and entirely destroyed them, so that after his time, the name of Amalek was heard no more. And, my brethren, his utter destruction, shews what will be the awful end of the Lord's enemies, when He comes.

Now that we have carried the history of the Amalekites to its end, we must come back to their first battle with the children of Israel; for it is a picture of the struggle that goes on in the true Christian, between the sinful flesh and the renewed spirit. It ought to be something for us all to think about, because, as flesh and spirit never can agree, if any of us are really become children of God, we must feel, more or less, that such a struggle is going on in ourselves; and when we feel how weak we are, and how strong are our sinful habits, we may learn from this history, where to look for help. As the battle in the wilderness was fought under the leadership of Joshua, whose name is the same as Jesus, so the Christian must fight against the world, and self, and the devil, under the banner of the "Captain of our Salvation," the Lord Jesus Christ. And He does for

His people, all that Joshua and Moses both together, could do for Israel, and more, far more. He leads them in the fight like Joshua, and He prays for them like Moses, only *He* is never tired. As soon as Moses was unable from weariness, to hold up his hands in prayer, the battle went against his people; because he was their mediator; it was only through Moses that the Lord sent down blessings to Israel, and when he was unable to ask for it, the blessing did not come. Moses praying on the hill-top was the type of the Lord Jesus pleading for us before the throne in heaven, but how weak and feeble a type! How different in his weakness and weariness from *our* Mediator! “He *ever* liveth to make intercession for us.” He appears before God’s throne, and is always advocating His people’s cause, and holding up the hands that once were pierced with nails, and streamed with blood; and the Father can refuse nothing to that blood, and those prayers, but sends down fulness of grace and blessing in answer; and the tried and struggling child of God, knows, that though the battle of life be fierce and long, though he have to fight all through “the burden and heat of the day,” at evening time, he shall wave the victor’s palm, and join in the song of thanksgiving, to Him whose love has made him “more than conqueror” at last.

My brethren, does this sound like something strange in your ears? Do you understand any-

thing of all this ? Do you know anything about fighting with your sins ? anything of earnest and painful striving, to get the better of your bad habits ? anything about weary disheartening, for your frequent falls ? or of feeling that your corruptions are too strong, and too many for you, that you cannot master them ? Neither you can, if you look to no higher strength than your own ; but if any of you know really, what it is to struggle against your sins, because they grieve your Saviour, then don't be afraid, take comfort, look up and see who is on your side, leading you in the battle, raising you when you fall, and praying for you without leaving off, till the fighting shall be over, and the victory won.

“ Consider Jesus ; ” He is now at the right hand of God, in the glory of heaven, but He once lived down here, a man like us, in all but sin ; beset with our infirmities, and exposed to trials and temptations far far greater than any we can know ; so He is the very Friend and Saviour we need, for He knows what we are made of. He can enter, by His own experience, into all that troubles us ; He has, we can well believe, a very tender sympathy with working men. He understands their difficulties and peculiar trials ; He knows how temptations come to them, and how hard it often is, to get the better, and turn away from places and companions that lead them to sin.

And Jesus is the very Advocate that we need to

appear before God in our behalf, for He knows everything about us, all our struggles to stand upright, all the bitter grief over our falls, all the earnest, though feeble resolutions to do better; and then, the over confidence, and the want of watching, and the neglect of prayer, and the falling again and again; He knows and sees everything, and loves us through it all. Ah, my brethren, it is only through Jesus, that His people shall win the day; it is only because they have an Elder Brother to plead for them, that they shall gain the victory, for His love won't let him leave off, so long as any of His own are exposed to danger, and struggling with their enemies. And He sends His Spirit to dwell in them, to confirm their feeble faith, and to strengthen their good desires, that they may overcome the world and the wicked one, and inherit eternal life.

Now answer this to your own hearts. When God has given you such a Saviour, and such an Advocate in heaven, why should any of you lose your souls? The Lord does not desire, nay, He is not willing, that any one of you should die. He wants all of you to come to Him, and live. His heaven is wide enough, and His mercy is large enough, to take you all in; there is room enough and to spare, there is a kind and loving welcome for all. Then when God asks you, why don't you go? Are none of you such as He invites?—None of you weary, heavy laden sinners?—Weary of the

wear and tear of life, and longing to be sure that you've a better one to look to?—None of you weary of your own sinful selves, and heavy laden with the burden of disappointment, and sorrow, and sin? Ah, surely there are some among you, who are weary of setting your hearts on the world, and are longing for better things—who feel the emptiness and vanity of all things here, and are longing for the hope of an unfading inheritance, and for present rest, in the Saviour's love. Then why do you keep putting off from day to day, from week to week? Are you waiting till you've more leisure, or better thoughts, or truer repentance? Then you may never come—death may be upon you before your better time comes. There is no reason to believe it ever came to Felix the governor.

When Paul was speaking to him about righteousness and temperance, and telling him that there was a judgment to come, Felix trembled, Acts xiv. 25. He remembered his sins; he felt that he could not stand before the judgment-seat of a just and holy God, and yet the miserable man put off, and turned away from him, who would have shewn him how to find peace. “Go thy way for this time,” said he to St Paul; “when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;” but the devil took care he should never find one. Remember this, my friends; convenient seasons, or leisure times, are things that seldom come,

when you really want them. No time is yours, but “now;” your first time, is the best time, and your first step, must be to Jesus. The Lord says, “Come *now*,” Isa. i. 18; and the Saviour says, “Come unto *me*,” Matt. xi. 28. Then, don’t you go to seek after repentance, or good thoughts, or duties rightly done, to bring in your hand—if you had them all, they couldn’t help you—just believe that God really means what He says, when He tells you to go to Him just as you are; and though your sins should be as deeply dyed as crimson or scarlet, they shall be washed out as white as the purest wool or snow. Jesus gave up His life—shed His blood, on purpose to make amends for our sins, and it is for *His* sake, not ours, that God can pardon, and make us holy. Therefore, brethren, the worst sin you can commit, is not to believe in God, and put your trust in Jesus; not to love Him who so loves you, and who tells you, that there is joy in heaven, whenever any poor wandering sinner comes back to God. Do you say, How must we go? Go as David did, who went and confessed to God, how grievously he had sinned against Him, and then prayed for pardon, and for the Holy Spirit to restore him to the joy of feeling that he was saved, and to make his heart clean. Go like Daniel, who set himself in right earnest, to make humble confession of his own sins and the sins of his people before God, and to ask forgiveness, and

even while he was praying, the answer came, his prayer was granted, before it was finished. Just you go to your heavenly Father in the same way. He is very near, though you can't see Him yet: He hears your lightest whisper, when you tell Him about your sins and troubles, and how cold and worldly your hearts are, and how hard you find it to think of anything better, than what goes on around you. He listens to your simplest prayer, when you beg Him to pardon and save you for Jesus' sake, and to give you new hearts, warm with grateful love to Him. You know that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to save us, He took all the anger, and all the punishment on Himself, that there might be nothing left for poor sinners but love. God is your Father, now; if you believe in Jesus, you needn't be afraid to go and pray to Him; you are not half so anxious to be pardoned and saved, as He is anxious to save you. Think of all God has done, to make it easy for you to go to Him, and be safe and happy for ever. He does not ask you to do anything first; He does not bid you repent, and mend your ways first, and then He will forgive you. He says, "*Come now.*" Go just as you are; you cannot mend yourselves, and God says, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely," Hosea xiv. 4. Don't you remember about the prodigal son? He didn't wait till he had begged or borrowed some decent clothes *to appear* before his father in; no doubt he was



ashamed of being such a figure, yet he went back in the miserable rags, which were all he had belonging to him, and *in them* he was folded to his father's heart, and felt tears—tears of love and joy—fall on his face from his father's eyes, because he, the sinning, the lost one, had returned home. But notice this : as soon as the wanderer came back, and was taken to his father's arms, he wasn't allowed to stay ragged and barefoot any longer ; he was not fit for his home that way ; so his father sent directly, for the best robe, and a ring, and shoes for him, to shew that he was not only fully forgiven, and restored to his father's love as a dear son, but was raised to a higher place, and treated with greater honour than he had before. Now, you have all been like the prodigal, in sinning against your gracious Father, you are all like him, in having nothing but rags of your own ; be you like him, too, in rising up and going to your God, confessing your unworthiness, and praying to be forgiven for your Saviour's sake. Go as he did, just as you are ; you will be welcomed with joy, and without one upbraiding word, and find all that you need in the love of Jesus—pardon for your sins, peace of conscience, and the Saviour's perfect goodness, reckoned to you as your own, so that you can stand before God, in the judgment without fear ; for you stand behind your Advocate, who pleads that His blood has paid your debt, and washed out all your stains.

Oh, my brethren, *now*, now is your time ; don't lie down in your beds this night, till you have humbly and heartily asked God, to take you to the arms of His mercy, for the love of His dear Son !



## EXODUS XVIII. XIX. XX.

**I**N chapter xviii. we have the account of a visit which, about this time, or perhaps shortly afterwards, was paid to Moses by his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. We may be sure that the fame of the mighty wonders that had been wrought in Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, was ringing through the deserts of Arabia and the neighbouring countries, and it reached the ear of Jethro. He listened to the tale with such deep interest, that he could not stay quietly at home, but as soon as he "heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt," he took his daughter, Moses' wife, and her two children, and set out to see his son-in-law.

He found the host of Israel encamped in the wilderness of Sinai, near Mount Horeb, and he sent to Moses to say, "I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her." Moses received his father-in-law with great respect and affection; he went out to meet

him, and bowed down before him, and “kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare,” and then went together into Moses’ tent. “And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel’s sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.”

Though he did not belong to the children of Israel, Jethro could rejoice at all the great things that had been done for them, and praise the Lord for His goodness in taking care of His people, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies. “And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.” And then, Jethro, who was a priest, solemnly worshipped God by offering the bleeding lamb, with sacrifices of thanksgiving, before sitting down with Moses and Aaron, and the elders of Israel, to eat bread before God.

What a beautiful meeting that was, brethren! The old man, who, though he wasn’t an Israelite, *was* a descendant of Abraham, and a worshipper

of his father's God, brought to Moses his wife and sons, whom he had sent back to Midian, when he went, by God's command, to deliver His people out of Egypt. Moses was the Lord's servant; and when he had a great work appointed him, he willingly left wife and family for his Master's sake: but now times are changed, and it was right for them to come to him, and strive to comfort and cheer him, in the midst of his toilsome and harassing duties, in leading and governing the unruly people. But it wasn't merely to take care of his daughter and grandsons through the desert, that now brought Jethro to Moses: he came to hear if the wonderful, glorious things that all men were talking about, were true; he came to know whether the Lord had really wrought such a great salvation for Israel; and after his son-in-law and he, had met like friends and relatives, it was the noble works of the Lord, that they talked about. The "high praises" of God, were first in their mouth, and they rejoiced together, in speaking and hearing of all the mighty acts of the God of Israel. Surely such talk was well worth a long journey through the wilderness; and surely Christians should oftener be like Jethro, in making God's kind and gracious dealings, the subject of their discourse when they meet together; for they have many merciful deliverances to thank Him for, as well as the children of Israel. Ah, brethren, if we *felt* more deeply what the Lord Jesus has done for us,

in bearing our curse, and laying down His life that we might live, surely we should not always keep such cold silence about Him, surely “our hearts would sometimes burn within us,” when we thought on His love, and all it led Him through, for our sakes. Help us, gracious Saviour, help us to *feel* more deeply what we owe to Thee !

Now notice how earnest, and diligent Moses was, as the Lord’s servant. “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people : and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.” Though he had just got his wife and children home, and his father-in-law was come to visit him, he doesn’t give himself any holiday from his daily duties, but the very next morning, he is busy as usual as the judge and adviser of the people, and in teaching them what God’s laws were, on all the cases that they laid before him. Of course, it took up the whole of Moses’ time ; for the people were very many, and seem to have been very quarrelsome, and he had no one to help him.

You may, perhaps, wonder what they quarrelled about, travelling through the desert, having neither houses nor lands, nor anything but what they carried with them. But though the children of Israel were wanderers ; they weren’t beggars—they had plenty of silver and gold, and other things—and so there was plenty to go to law about. And *if they had had nothing but the clothes on their*

backs, they would have quarrelled still, for they had sinful hearts within their breasts, and out of men's evil hearts, come strife, envying, and all uncharitable, unkind feelings towards one another. When the apostle James asked where "wars and fightings" came from, he himself answered, out of the sinful hearts within us; envying and coveting what is not ours, and striving to get for ourselves, what belongs to others. What does he tell us to do? To cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, by drawing near to God, James iv. 8, so, seeking to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my brethren, if we were ever so little like *Him*, we shouldn't often quarrel with our neighbours.

"And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God. When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws." Jethro, who seems to have been a very sensible man, with a clear head, saw at once, that Moses was wasting his own strength, and wearing the temper and patience of the people, by trying to do by himself, what was far too much for any one man to do rightly; and

he strongly advised his son-in-law, to choose out from among the people themselves, men, who would take a great burden off his shoulders, by hearing all the small cases, giving judgment, and being rulers over the people, if he should find that such a thing was according to God's will. Moses was still to be between the people and God; he had to lay every serious matter before Him, and teach His law to them, but all common cases could be decided, and justice done, by the men whom he should provide. Every great matter they were to take to Moses, and every small matter they could judge themselves: so, said Jethro, "shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee." That sounds very good advice, and easily followed, if Moses could find the right men, to put in so responsible a position. What kind of men did his father-in-law recommend him to look for? "Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." There we have the character of perfect judges. Clever and learned, able to judge rightly in every matter, between man and man, fearing God, and so loving justice, mercy, and truth; and hating all covetous desire of money, so their hands would never be soiled by a bribe. Let us thank God, brethren, for the able and upright judges of our own land.

We read next, "So Moses hearkened to the voice of *his* father-in-law, and did all that he had said.



And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard cases they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves." After that was done, Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

We have now come to a very solemn chapter, in the story of God's dealings with the children of Israel. Nearly three months had passed away, since the Lord had led his people out of Egypt, and they are now encamped in the wilderness before mount Sinai.

The Lord had made a covenant with the people, when He sweetened for them the bitter waters of Marah; that if they would hearken to His voice, and do that which is right in his sight, and give ear to all His commandments, and keep all His statutes, that He would put none of the evil diseases of Egypt upon them; and the time was now come for Him to publish His holy law, and make the people know what His commandments and His statutes were. The law of God had been written in Adam's heart, when he came pure and holy from his Maker's hand, but he disobeyed it, and became a sinner. Then both power and will to keep the law were lost; and man, fallen under the curse, was taught to look to a coming Saviour, by the bleeding sacrifices he was commanded to

offer, as the only way by which sinners could be brought back to God.

And time rolled on, and the sons of men grew more and more wicked, and the Lord determined to choose a people out of the world, for Himself; that He might teach them, and give them His holy law again, and set them for an example, and a warning, and a lesson book to the Christian church in after times. Now give good heed to this, and may God's Spirit guide us to a right understanding of His ways and word!

The host of Israel were gathered in the plain, at the foot of mount Sinai. The mountain must have been an awful object for Israel to look upon, for the Lord God Almighty was there. He had come down, as it were, to the top of the mount; but His dwelling-place was hidden from the sight of the people, it was veiled in a thick cloud that no eye could pierce through: Moses alone, as the mediator, who went between his people and God, dared approach nearer. "And the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare *you* on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." What gracious words they were that came from the thick cloud where God was! He calls the people by the name of Jacob (the supplanter), and Israel (*the prince*), that they may remember what they

are in themselves, and what He has made them. He reminds them of all the wonders He had wrought for them in Egypt, and had borne them as on eagles' wings, leading them out by the right arm of His power, and all that, was to bring them home to Himself. Ah, brethren, that is what the heart of our God is set on; to bring His people home to Himself! It was for *that*, He sent the Son of His love to open a right way for the wanderers to come back: it is for *that*, He now sends forth His Holy Spirit to turn lost wilful rebels into dear children. It was for *that*, the Saviour went back to heaven, that He might prepare places for His own, in the many mansions of His Father's house.

The Lord goes on to say to His people Israel, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." The Lord was to renew his agreement with Israel, and the terms were to be as before; obedience on their part, followed by special love and blessing on His. They should be to Him "a peculiar treasure," "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation," (that is just what St Peter calls all true Christians) 1 Peter ii. 9. What had Israel done, to be so distinguished, so chosen out for favour

and blessing? It was none of their doing. Moses tells them afterwards, that it was for nothing in *them*: "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; (for ye were the fewest of all people;) but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers," Deut. vii. 7. My brethren, is not *that* the reason, why any of us are saved? What has any sinner done, to deserve that God should save him? Oh, nothing; in himself he is all unclean; but God loves him, and saves him for what Jesus has done, and for the sake of His holy covenant made with Him, before the world began, that He will save all that believe, for His sake.

If any of you are not saved at last, it will not be because God was not willing, or that Jesus had not done enough to save you; it will be because you *would* not come to Him, when you might have come. Let that not be with any of you, I beseech you.

"And Moses came, and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." They made fair promises; they undertook to be obedient, to do all that the Lord had commanded. How little *they* knew about themselves! how little notion

they had either of God's holiness or of their own weakness and sinfulness, when they could so boldly promise to do all that should be required of them! "And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." You see, don't you, that Moses was the *go between*, as you would say; he acted on behalf of the people with God. The Lord did not deal directly with the children of Israel; He dealt with Moses for them. Moses was the mediator; thus shewing to the Jews first, and to Christians afterwards, that sinful men cannot directly approach the holy God. God cannot deal with fallen creatures except through a mediator, one to stand between Him and them; and Moses, the mediator between God and the Jews, or children of Israel, was appointed to be the type or picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and sinners. But we shall see more of this, by and by.

The Lord put honour upon His servant Moses in the face of all the people, by speaking aloud to him out of the thick cloud, so that they might believe all that Moses told them, as the word of the living God. Moses was commanded to sanctify or purify the people, by the burnt offering, and they were to wash their clothes; these were signs

that purity of heart and life was necessary for those who would stand in God's holy presence: they were to be holy, because He is holy. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai." But they were not to come too near; there was to be no rash, familiar approach to the awful place; mount Sinai was to be fenced all round with barriers, to keep the people at a distance; they might not come near, nor even touch it, or they should surely die.

Moses was ordered to "set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." Moses then went down from the top of the mount, which he alone, of all the sons of men, might set his foot on; and sanctified the people, who washed their clothes, and made themselves ready against the third day. And the third morning broke, amid the rolling of thunder, and the flashing lightning, and from the thick, dark cloud sounded the voice of the trumpet

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loud and shrill, in their ears, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled, and even Moses himself was struck with terror, for St Paul tells us that he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb. xii. 21.

"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount." And as they stood trembling, they saw that "mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up." But the Lord sent him down again, to give the people strict charge not to break through the barriers, and come any nearer, from an irreverent curiosity to see what was behind the awful cloud. "Charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish." The priests, as well as the people, were to sanctify themselves, and were not to try to come any nearer than the rest of the camp: Aaron was afterwards to go up with Moses, but now Moses went down to the people, and spoke to them. Long afterwards, in telling the children of Israel

about that awful day, Moses reminded them that the Lord their God made a covenant with them in Horeb (which was a part of mount Sinai), and said, "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount)," Deut. v. 4, 5.

And what, my brethren, what were the words that came from the mouth of God Himself, from the midst of the fire, and the smoking mountain, and from the thick darkness? Just those solemn words that are read every Sunday in our ears; the ten commandments. The Lord God began by reminding His people, that He had a right to their obedience. He says, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." He had redeemed the people, so they were doubly His; He had a right to them, and to all they had. And then, amid the thunders and the awful majesty of Sinai, the moral law, the ten holy commandments of God, are published in the ears of the children of Israel, to be binding on the hearts of His people for ever.

"God said, Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Now, my brethren, perhaps you think you know all about the ten commandments. You learned to say them by rote, when you were children, and



you have heard them read since, every time you have been in church; and you have, it may be, sometimes joined in asking God, to incline your hearts to keep His laws: yet, when we try to consider them, not merely as the most part of the Jews understood them, but in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ explained them, you will find that there is a great deal more in them than you ever thought of.

Lord, “all thy commandments are righteousness and truth.” Give us new hearts, and teach us to love them!

The first commandment forbids any other God to be worshipped, than the one only true God. The children of Israel had been used in the land of Egypt, to see almost as many false gods, as there were foolish and ignorant people, to do them reverence. You remember, in the history of the plagues, how the Egyptians not only worshipped idols of stone, but birds, and beasts, and creeping things, as well as the sun, and the river Nile. Now the Lord solemnly forbids any other god. Nothing whatever was to be set up and worshipped, beside Him. The Lord was the true God, the “Maker of heaven and earth,” and Him only were men to serve. They were forbidden to worship any of His works, nor anything of their own making. The children of Israel always found it very hard, to keep the first commandment; for there were so many heathen beside them, who all had different

idols of their own, that it was a constant snare and temptation to them to do as the other nations did; and in after times they were continually forsaking the Lord their God, and going after the abominations of their neighbours, worshipping stocks and stones, and the sun, moon, and stars. Hear what Moses tells them. It was given to him before he died, to foretell what should happen to his people in time to come, and he faithfully warned them with his dying breath. He told them, that when they should have become a prosperous and flourishing people, then they would forsake the God that made them, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation; and he goes on, "They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee," Deut. xxxii. 16, 17, 18. Is not that a sad picture of man's evil heart? To forget and forsake the gracious God, from whom all his blessings come, and to set his affections on anything, however vile, rather than on Him.

But though it might be hard to the children of Israel, you think it is easy for *you*, to keep the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," because there are no idols here. This is a Christian land, and nobody here worships any

but the true God; there is no temptation to us, to forsake the Lord, and follow after the abominations of heathen countries. Ah, my brethren, there are plenty of false gods among us, plenty of idols that are not “graven by art or man’s device,” yet are as devoutly worshipped in this Christian country of ours, as ever stocks and stones were, in any heathen land. Listen to the first commandment, as explained both by Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ: “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,” Deut. vi. 4, 5; Luke x. 27. Now, who can say that he loves his God with all his might? And why don’t men so love Him as they are commanded? Because their hearts are filled with something else; because an idol has taken God’s place, and gets the love, and the worship, and the service that should belong to Him alone. Brethren, that idol is—*self*. The love of self, fills every human heart till God’s Spirit comes in, and brings the love of Jesus with Him. Then the idol is thrown down, but it is not broken in pieces and destroyed; the love of self is weakened and put down, and the love of God takes its right place; but self is always ready to start up again, and to struggle for the mastery; and it *will* do all our lives, till at last, by God’s mercy, it is conquered, and Jesus reigns in our hearts, a King for ever.

It is this love of *self*, my brethren, which leads to all that is evil in the world. It causes the breaking of all God's commandments; it makes men worship gold; it makes them forget God, and neglect their souls, in the covetous desire of money, which is called "idolatry," Col. iii. 5, and "the root of all evil," 1 Tim. vi. 10; it makes men forget their God while running after what they think pleasure, of whatever kind it be. These set up different idols for themselves, such as may suit their different tastes and likings, but all belonging to self-love; some are so taken up with their daily work, that they have no thoughts, and no time for God; their business is their idol; and many set up things that are good and beautiful in themselves, as family affection, learning, art, and other objects, but they are all *idols*, when they get into God's place, and fill the heart, which was created for Him, and His satisfying, purifying love. No, my brethren, we can none of us truly say, that we are no idolaters; we must rather confess our sins, and pray, in deep humility of heart, "Lord, have mercy upon us; and incline our hearts now, to keep thy holy law!"

As the first commandment forbids us to worship any god, but the only true God, so the second, forbids us to worship Him in a wrong way: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the

water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." We are not to set up any picture or image, or anything that we fancy like God, in order to remind us of Him, when we want to pray, or to think of our Father in heaven. We are solemnly forbidden to bow down to any of those things, or to have them at all, in connection with the worship of God ; for the Lord who made us, knew that when men make graven images or pictures, and bow before them by way of helping themselves to think properly about God, they very soon learn to look no higher than the image ; their God is forgotten, and the picture, or idol, takes up their thoughts. There is no sin so often spoken against, in the Bible as *idolatry* : it is detestable to God ; and to hinder men from falling into it, the Lord solemnly forbids the religious use of any of those things, they were not even to be made, for any such purpose. Moses reminds the children of Israel, that the Lord had not thought it needful to shew them any likeness of Himself, when He spoke to them out of the midst of the fire, on mount Sinai ; " Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, . . . . lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image. . . . .

**For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God," Deut. iv. 15, 16, 24. He will not give His glory to another; neither will He be worshipped by the work of men's hands.**

**And what does the Lord Jesus Christ say? Surely He who came down from God, knew best how to worship Him; He says, "The true worshippers, shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 23, 24. Remember, brethren, that flesh and spirit cannot agree. If we would offer to our God a real spiritual worship, it must come from the heart and mind, guided by the Holy Spirit, and fixed on Him in faith and love; not through the eye and fancy, guided by a picture or an image. Consider Jesus, and try to follow Him. He prayed with His whole heart to His Father; "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name. I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify Thy name for evermore," Ps. lxxxvi. 11. 12.**

## EXODUS XX.

**Y**OU remember, brethren, that the first commandment forbade that any god should be worshipped, but the one only true God; and that the second forbade the one true God to be worshipped in a wrong way, by using images or pictures, or anything intended to bring the unseen God before the mind; so the third commandment was given to guard the most holy Name, the Name of the one true God, from being used in any sinful or irreverent manner: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Now, in order to see clearly what is the meaning of breaking the third commandment, and how great a sin it is, we must remember, that when the Bible speaks of the name of God, it means God Himself; God in His mighty power and wisdom, as the Creator of all things; and God in His holy compassion and love, as the Redeemer and Saviour of men: and when it calls on us to bless and

praise His holy name, it is reminding us that we owe to God our life, and every good thing; that all our blessings in this life, and all we hope for in heaven, are the gifts of our Father's love. When we think of all that, do we not see what an awful, ungrateful sin it must be, to take the holy and blessed Name into the mouth, when there is not a feeling of reverence, or thankfulness, or love, to Him in the heart? Those who read the Bible, know how often the Lord speaks of the jealous care, He has for His holy name, and says that He will not have it abused. He brought sore punishments on the people of Israel, because they profaned it, and said, "I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more;" and, I "will be jealous for my holy name," Ezek. xxxix. 7, 25. We can see that, in the third commandment; when the Lord says that He "will not hold him guiltless that taketh his holy name in vain." Taking God's name in vain, cannot be punished by law; the magistrate cannot take notice of it, yet man must not fancy that no ear listens, for the Lord Himself keeps an account, and will take the punishment of it into His own hands. And surely, my brethren, there is no sin so continually committed. It is so common, that people don't think of it as a sin at all. There are many ways of taking God's name in vain. There is the taking a false oath in a court of justice—a man



swearing to that which he knows to be untrue, dishonouring and abusing the holy Name by speaking it in the same breath, with a deliberate lie. There is the awful and terrible habit of cursing and swearing, and uttering profane and filthy language, which is one of the crying sins of our people, and so frightfully common, that people neither think nor care about it, for the worst of it is, that they have learned it in childhood! How dreadful it is, to think that children, so soon as they can speak, learn to lisp vile words, and to utter curses and lies, without knowing what they are doing. How dreadful to know, that nowhere, in town or country, can one go among children at play with one another, without hearing that most sad and sorrowful sound, oaths and cursing, coming from infant lips; the little ones unconsciously taking their Maker's name in vain, and soiling their tongues, by speaking filthy and abominable words that it is a shame even to hear. They pick them up from their playmates, their sinful nature making them quick to follow the evil examples around them, and do as they hear others do. My friends, we all know that this sorrowful state of things is true. Can nothing be done to mend it? Must it go on, getting from bad to worse? Can the children of our people not be taught better at home? Can they not be taught from their very cradles, to love and reverence the blessed Name of the Saviour who died for them?

Can they not be taught that to speak filthy and profane words is a great sin? Surely it would not grow into a habit, if the parents would firmly and gently correct them, at all times, for doing it; and never allow them to hear, or to use bad words at home; and if they would do all they can, to keep them from bad companions, for evil companionship, it is that which corrupts and ruins most young people, by encouraging the evil that is in them.

Might that care not be taken, to a great extent, in the cottage homes of our land? Might the children not be better attended to, than they generally are, at home? And yet, alas! how can it be looked for, unless our cottage homes were Christian homes? For unless the fathers and mothers be true Christians themselves, how can they give their children Christian home training, or set a godly example before them? how can they watch over them, and strive to bring them up to love their God, and to honour His blessed name? Ah, brethren, we often hear our country called Christian England; but if there were not a fearful want of real, hearty Christianity among us, should we see God's holy commandments so openly, and so widely, and so continually broken and set at nought, every day, and everywhere? Surely, whatever other nations may be, we in Britain have deep cause to be ashamed, and to grieve for our sins, for the sins of our people, and our own; surely we

have deep need to cry, "God be merciful to us sinners!"

And there is such a thing, as taking God's name in vain, by our behaviour, our way of living, as well as by our words. When they who are called by the name of Christ, live as if they neither knew nor cared anything about Him; when they, who by their name of Christian, profess themselves the servants of Christ, yet are living without seeking to please Him, serving the world, themselves, and the devil, without a thought of *Him*; are they not "blaspheming that worthy name by which they are called?" James ii. 7. Are they not living a lie? bearing the name of Christ, as if it were their own, while in their hearts they are saying to Him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?" Job. xxi. 14. My brethren, we are all verily guilty in this matter; let us pray again and again, for the pardoning blood which cleanses from all sin; and ask in right earnest that the Lord would incline our hearts, to keep His holy law.

There is another very serious thing we must notice. There are many among us who are not guilty of breaking the third commandment, either by taking false oaths, or by swearing, or using coarse and profane language: such abominations are considered low and vulgar, and have been put an end to, in these days, by education and good manners. But can the educated, and the moral,

glorify thy name," John xii. 28 ; and He was content to die, that that holy Name might be honoured and magnified, through all creation. Let us "consider Him," and learn more and more to love the name of our God, that we may grow like Jesus, Heb. xii. 2.

The fourth commandment is, "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work : but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it." You notice, it begins with "Remember the sabbath-day." That shews it was not a *new* thing, to the children of Israel ; for people are not expected to remember what they never heard of. We have seen that they did know it, though they had not been allowed to keep it, during their slavery in Egypt ; but after they were brought out, the Lord gave the blessed Sabbath again, to His people whom He had redeemed, and taught them to keep it, when He sent them bread from heaven. You remember that the manna they were fed with, did not fall on the Sabbath day, but a double portion fell on the day before ; and if you've not forgotten the book of

Genesis, you know we read there, how the Lord, when He had finished His work of creation, rested on the seventh day; so that the holy Sabbath is as old as the world.

But the Sabbath of rest was not to be kept in memory of creation only, it was to be a memorial of redemption also; to remind the children of Israel, that they had been redeemed from bondage.


When Moses was repeating all the commandments to them, shortly before his death, he said, when he had finished the fourth, "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day," Deut. v. 15. And the day of rest, or Lord's day, should also remind us of our Saviour's rising from the grave for our justification; and it is a type or picture, of the glorious and eternal rest in heaven, which shall begin when the work of grace is finished, when God's people shall be with their Lord, and have done with sin and sorrow for ever.

The Sabbath was given to man when he was innocent. In the garden of Eden, which Adam had to dress and keep, by the labour of his hands, we can fancy that he would lay aside his simple tools on the evening before, and be ready on the blessed morning, to praise his God with joyful lips, to thank Him with a glowing heart, for making

him so happy, and to think of all His wondrous works.

Perhaps on that holy day, the Lord God was used to walk in the garden, in the cool of the evening; in loving and gracious talk with His holy, happy creature; while Adam rejoiced in the blessed privilege, and sought to acquaint himself more and more, with his kind and bountiful Father; he would feel that the Sabbath was a day of delight, when he might give his whole time to heavenly thoughts and heavenly discourse. All this may have been; and, my brethren, if the Sabbath were given to be a blessing to man, when he was innocent and happy, only working so long at one time as to make rest, a fresh happiness,—if the Sabbath were to be a day of special joy and blessedness in Eden; what *might* it be to fallen, sinful, toil-worn man?—what might it be in this weary, groaning world, if it were prized, and loved, and used as God meant it to be, when He gave it to men, as their birthright?

Only think what this world might be even now; think what the crowded cities of our land, ay, and what your own neighbourhoods might be, if the Lord's day were felt by all, to be a blessed and a gracious gift; and spent as a day of rest from toil and worldly cares, a day to draw near to God in public worship, and in quiet enjoyment of the purifying influence of family affection. For working men especially, it should be so; and the




difference it would make in them, would be speedily seen.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” What is keeping holy? Is it setting apart from common use, for God? Then, surely, there are but few among us who keep the Sunday holy; though it is valued and kept as a holiday, by tens of thousands. None of the working classes would like to give up their Sunday, though perhaps many of their employers would like to take it from them; but how do the most of them use their God’s merciful gift? Many use it for taking their pleasure; spending it all in dressing, and traveling, and visiting, and feasting; many waste the best of it in sleep; many in rioting and merry-making; many make it a day of letter writing, and private business; taking the sacred hours, which belong to their God, and misapplying them to every sinful and selfish purpose of their own: while a few, we gladly believe, love and prize the blessed day, and welcome its coming round, not only as a relief from daily toil, but because they feel it good for them, to gather their children round them, and go to the house of God; for they often hear words there, that guide and cheer them through the week’s work, and the week’s trials. And these know what a blessing it is to them, to remember the Lord’s day, and to keep it holy.

There is an awful question in the Bible, that men think little about. “Will a man rob God?”

Mal. iii. 8. What a dreadful thing, you will say ; how could it be done ? The children of Israel robbed their God, by keeping back the offerings of His service, and by neglecting and despising His Sabbaths ; and they have been sorely punished for their wickedness. And are we not laying up for ourselves far sorer punishment ? for we, in England, have much clearer light, and much plainer guiding, than the Jews had in their day. They had the ten commandments ; so have we, and the Saviour's own example besides, and the holy teaching of His apostles too, to go by. And is our God not robbed among us ? Is He not robbed, by the countless multitudes who keep the six days for their work, and take the seventh for their pleasure ? Is He not robbed, by the thousands of moral, respectable persons in all ranks, who attend church on Sunday morning, and then consider that the rest of the day is their own, to spend as they like ; their conscience quite satisfied by their having so far, shewn respect to Christian custom ; plainly shewing that it was not love to God, neither pleasure in His service, that took them to His house ? Ah, brethren, we all rob our merciful God in many ways ; for example, when we take our bodies to church, but leave our hearts at home, and our thoughts far away ; when we bestow on earthly objects, the best of our affection, which is His by right ; and when we spend the prime of our strength, and the best of our days, in the





service of self and the world, which were given to be used for His glory. What would become of us if we had not the Saviour to go to?

Some of you may ask, Why did the Lord keep one day in the week for Himself? He can't be benefited by men's keeping the Sunday holy; our goodness can't reach to Him; He has no need of our services; He who commands the adoring praises of heaven,—whose ear is filled with the glad songs of angels,—He can't need ours. No, my brethren, but we need Him; and we cannot be happy without Him. We *must* get to heaven. Our God knows that, and He wants us to come to Him, and be happy. And in His great love, He has shewn us the only right way, and He gave us the Lord's day, on purpose that all, and especially His hard-working children, might have time to learn it. And men's bitter enemy, the devil, is always trying to keep them from it. He has all manner of temptations ready, to hinder people from using the Lord's day aright, (and their own sinful hearts are ready enough to fall into them); he has business for some; pleasure for many; sloth and sleep for others; self-seeking and self-pleasing for all; men may do anything they like on the Lord's day, so that they don't keep it holy.

My friends, God's gifts are never given in vain; the best blessings, if abused, become the heaviest curses. It will be so with the holy Lord's day; and they who despise and neglect God's best and

greatest gift, the Son of His love, will have to wail over their awful mistake for ever, and vainly wish they had never been born. For them will come no soothing day of rest ; their gnawing worm will never die ; no Sabbath morning will ever dawn on the blackness of hell ; for nothing that is good can enter there, and no hope of change can ever come.

It is well known, that many of the wretched creatures, who by their crimes have become the shame of their parents, the plague of society, and the disgrace of their native country, have confessed with their dying breath, that their first downward plunge into evil, was the habit of playing truant from church and school, and running riot on Sunday with wild companions. It is said in the Bible, that the devil goes about looking for those whom he can devour ; and Sunday must be a busy day to him. The multitudes of men, and women, and young people, that he sees going about idle and careless ; he keeps from the house of God altogether, tells them they have a right to their Sunday, and bids them seek their own amusement (and many of them find it in very bad places) ; but he goes into church, with the decent and respectable, seats himself among the worshippers, and then he finds plenty to do. He puts worldly, and foolish, and sinful thoughts into their minds, bids some think over the business of the coming week, or of the work done in the last ; he fills many

young heads, with plans for the afternoon's diversion, and many others with vain thoughts about their own dress, or envying of their neighbours'; some people he sets to think of their farms, some of their merchandise, and some of their homes and children, during the very time they are, many of them, on their knees, confessing their sins and praying for pardon after the minister, or sitting while the Word of God is read in their ears, or the message of a Saviour's love is preached before them. And then, for fear some of them might have heard anything to rouse their attention, and make them think about their souls, the people are hardly out of church, before they begin all manner of idle, gossiping, and worldly talk, with which, like the fowls of the air picking up the stray grains, the wicked one catches away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved. My brethren, is this not a true picture? Alas! that we should have sadly to confess it. We cannot change it for others; but let us pray to God that it be not true of ourselves any longer. You know the devil would not have such easy work, he would not find it so easy to tempt us to our ruin, if our own wicked and foolish hearts did not help him. If men and women would remember that the Lord Jesus says to His people, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" if they would keep themselves out of harm's way, it would not be so likely to come to them. Satan, with all

his malice, and with all his wiles, cannot get the better of those who stand up against him, praying for strength. The weakest child of God is more than a match for the "roaring lion," so long as he trusts in Jesus ; he has *Him* on his side, and the enemy cannot harm him. Remember how the Saviour, in our very nature, mastered the evil one ; and His people can do it too, if they love the word of God, and follow it, as He did. Now God has given you His holy day of rest, that all of you may have time for reading and laying up His blessed word in your hearts, and learning more about the Saviour. He has given you churches to gather together in, and He has appointed ministers to lead the worship, to read and preach His Word, and to administer the sacraments of His grace to you.

God knows that if men were left to themselves, without the wholesome check of the day of rest, they would soon be drowned in worldliness, and find their sure way down to destruction, they would never take to God's way,—but he has not left them so. In His great mercy, He has provided all those good things for them, that they may learn the way to heaven, and find grace to walk in it. You know it is *faith* that saves, by leading sinners to Jesus. Now we are told in the Bible, that faith comes by *hearing*. If it came but by *reading*, it would only be for scholars ; but it generally comes by hearing the word of God

read and preached. And surely that teaches us that, without a good reason, people are not to sit at home and read a sermon or a chapter for themselves; but to come to church and hear. Now the word is *read*, at least, in all our churches, so that the poor and the unlearned can always hear it. And what a blessing it is for those who can't read for themselves, to listen from week to week to the holy words which speak pardon and peace to the troubled heart, through the love of Jesus.

I have somewhere read of a poor woman who had never been taught to read in her youth, yet she learnt to know her Bible well, by her diligent attendance in church every Sunday, and the earnest, painstaking heed she gave to the service. The holy word heard on the Lord's day, was light and joy to her heart, cheering her through the week; and she died rejoicing in the Saviour she had learned to know and love, through God's blessing, on the diligent use of His own appointed means of grace.

My brethren, if any of you love the Lord, you don't need to be told to love His day and His house; you know what blessings they are to you. You can enter into king David's feelings, when he exclaimed on the Sabbath morning, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. For a day in thy courts is better

than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 10. But if David could feel such joy in attending the house of God in his day, where he had only dim shadows of the good things of the gospel; what would he, who longed to hear what we hear, think of the multitudes who pass by the church doors, in our Christian land, without caring to go in, and listen to the glad tidings, that kings and prophets, in old time, longed for in vain?

If you have not yet given your hearts to God; if you don't value His day for anything higher than the bodily rest and refreshment it brings, oh come now! There is time still. Ask God, for His mercy's sake, to put the love of Jesus into your hearts, and teach you to keep His day holy. Honour it in your homes: Let no needless work be done, but teach your children and your servants, to look on it as a sacred and a happy day. Let them see that you love it, and welcome it yourselves as the best in the week; a day that teaches you lessons of love to God, and peace and good will to all around you; and when, after the toil of the week, you can enjoy the comfort of quiet and cheerful family gatherings in your homes, sharing together the pure and wholesome recreation that refreshes both mind and body, and leaves no shame nor sorrow behind it.

You will find, if you will only try it fairly, that

a well spent Sunday sheds its blessing on the week, and brings you nearer to the rest and joy of heaven.

Now, I pray you, my brethren, think of these things calmly and seriously. There are many in our day, who grudge the working man his day of rest; there are many more, who are striving to get this holy Lord's day, turned into the world's holiday, and have all places of amusement opened, without the least regard to the just claims of the hundreds, who would thereby lose their day of rest. But mind, if men truly valued their Sunday for their souls' and their Saviour's sake, it *couldn't* be taken from them; it is their inheritance, which can only be lost through their own sin. Then don't let these words fall idly on your ears. My friends, remember that broken Sabbaths will be fearful witnesses against the ungodly. Think of the lost ones in hell, lifting up their eyes in torment, and crying vainly for but one of the holy days of rest, that they wasted and misused when they had them; and then kneel down and pray honestly to your God, to give you grace from this time, so to use His kind and considerate gift, that you shall praise His holy name for ever, for the blessed Lord's day.

## EXODUS XX.

**W**HEN the Lord gave the ten commandments to Moses, on mount Sinai, He wrote them Himself, on two tables of stone, that they might be preserved.

God would not have the knowledge of His will to rest on hearsay ; He would not trust it to the imperfect, treacherous memories of men ; so He wrote down His commandments, the moral law, with His own finger, that there might be no possibility of mistake, and that they might always be at hand, to teach that holy will to men.

Those tables of stone, remained for many hundred years, in the keeping of the children of Israel. They took care of the written tables, but they didn't keep the commandments. Their stony hearts were harder than the tables hewn out of the rock. The words of their God made no impression upon them. And, my brethren, our hearts are just as hard as theirs. There was but One human heart on which the law of God was ever written, and that was the holy, loving, tender heart of the



Man, Christ Jesus. No man ever kept, or could keep, God's commandments but He, and He kept them perfectly through all His life, from His lowly cradle, to His borrowed grave. He only could say to His Father, "Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Thy law is my delight," Ps. cxix. 97, 127, 174. Well was it for man, that Jesus so loved, and so kept, the law of God; for He obeyed it as man, in our place, and His sinless obedience is counted to all that trust in Him, and reckoned theirs as completely as if they had given it themselves. God's law said, Do this, and live, Lev. xviii. 5, Luke x. 28; Jesus did it, and earned eternal life, as the reward of His perfect well-doing as Man. He did not need to win it for Himself, it was His already; but He won it for us, for all who will believe in Him, and take it as a gift from His hand. He says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," John x. 28.

Brethren, will you not rise and go to the Lord Jesus, as your own Saviour, that you may have that glorious gift?

The ten commandments were written on two tables. One had the four first, that teach men what they owe to God, and those four, we have lately tried to consider. The second table held the six others, which teach what men owe to their fellow-men, in every relation of life. The fifth

commandment is the first of these. It is, "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Now, this seems to speak only of the duty of children to their parents. It begins there, my friends; but it doesn't end there. St Paul explains it, as taking in, also, the duty of parents to their children, and of masters and servants towards each other. Hear what he says: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth," Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3. St Paul must mean godly parents, who would not desire their children to do anything wrong, when he directs the young ones to obey them for the Lord's sake: for parents and masters can only claim obedience from children and servants, when their commands do not go against God's declared will.

But the will of God, is the only will that is above a parent's, to his child. The father is the head of the family, and he ought to be its ruler and guide. His will should be obeyed by wife and children, readily and gladly, with love and reverence in their hearts. When he comes home from his daily work, his presence should bring gladness with it, and win a loving welcome from the dear ones, for whose sakes he has been willingly toiling all the day;

while he finds his home, however poor it may be, brightened and cheered by pleasant smiles, and kindly words, and tidy carefulness. The evening is happily spent with his family, by his own fireside; and before lying down to rest, father and mother and children, kneel down before their Father in heaven, and offer thanks for all the mercies of the day, and ask for pardon of all the sins, and for care and watching through the dark hours of night. Such a home may be poor, but is a happy home; and there might be every hope that the children brought up in it, would turn out well.

My friends, there are not many such cottage homes among us, I verily believe; but why not? There is nothing said here, but what might be by the humblest fireside. Then how is it that really bright, cheerful, happy homes are so seldom met with? Is it because there are so few Christian homes among our people? so few godly fathers and mothers? so few children who are trained from their infancy, to love God and honour their parents? It must be so. Our gracious Father consulted the real well-being and happiness of His creatures, when He set men in families; when He appointed married life for men and women, and bid them look for their best earthly joy, in their home, with its sweet and purifying ties of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all bound together in close affection, lov-

ing, and honouring, and bearing with one another, comforting and helping each other, in sickness and sorrow, in old age and infirmity. And when our homes are not what God intended them to be, it is our own sins that hinder it, our want of love to God, that hinders our loving one another as we ought to do. For example, how can parents look for honour, and love, and willing obedience from their children, unless they have striven to train them aright in their youth? If fathers set an example of ungodliness and vice in their families, what right have they to complain, if their sons go beyond it, and turn out profligates and drunkards, or swearers and gamblers, when they have grown up amid such abominations, in their father's house? And where mothers never accustom their little ones to do as they are bid, and speak the truth; but let them grow up uncorrected, to do just as they like, perhaps because it saves some trouble in the mean time; how can they be surprised when their girls turn out idle and self-willed, given up to finery and folly, deceiving their mothers, and being deceived themselves, till they too often bring shame and disgrace on their own heads, and discredit and dishonour on their parents?

Ah, my friends, remember, that God has appointed, that you shall reap according to what you sow, Gal. vi. 7. If you desire to have comfort and blessing, in your grown up sons and daughters, sow the seed of God's word in their young hearts;

train them when children in the right way ; teach them by your own example ; let them see that the Saviour is loved and honoured in their homes ; let the Holy Bible be read day by day ; pray for them, and teach them to pray for the Spirit's grace for themselves ; thus you may humbly hope that wherever they may go in after life, they will not always forget the holy teaching of their father's house, nor forsake their father's God.

“ A wise son maketh a glad father,” Prov. x. 1. So says king Solomon. He cannot have had much gladness in his own son ; and perhaps had not much right to look for it ; but none knew better than he, how much a father's happiness in this world, depends on the well-doing of his children ; and nowhere do we find more wholesome lessons for the bringing up of a family, than in the book of Proverbs ; lessons of wisdom, the fruits, it may be, of bitter experience. Solomon says, and St Paul says after him, that children must be corrected when they do wrong ; not in angry passion, but gently and firmly, to profit them, and guide them in the way they should go.

And thus the home training, and parental discipline, become a sort of picture of our heavenly Father's dealing with us, His wayward, disobedient children : “ For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,” Heb. xii. 5, 6, Prov. iii. 11, 12. And, my friends, you do very wrong, you mothers especially,

when, because it gives you a good deal of trouble at first, to make the little ones obey, you let them get the better of you, and give them what they cry for, just to make them quiet. You are doing your children harm, and laying up sorrow for yourselves and them, by and by.

That is not the way of our wise and tender Father in heaven. He loves His children too well, to give them all they set their hearts on, when He knows it would be bad for them ; and He often lays on many and many a heavy stroke, not in anger, but to make them better, and fitter for the holy, happy home, He is making ready for them.

And young people should remember how solemnly the fifth commandment is addressed to them. Loving respect from children to their parents is natural, even to fallen and sinful man. Any want of it was looked on as a crime, by many heathen nations ; and by the law of Moses, any one who should strike, or abuse his father or mother, was to be put to death.

How strange it seems, how wicked it shews the natural heart to be, that fathers and mothers should need to be protected by law, from brutal usage by their own children ! and that law shews how hateful such unnatural conduct was, in God's sight.

It is not very often, that children lift their hands to take a parent's life, though even that

monstrous crime is sometimes heard of among us; but who can reckon up the blighted homes, the tear-dimmed eyes, the broken hearts, of fathers and mothers, going down to the grave in hopeless grief, for the ill-doing of those, who were once their pride? Perhaps no heart, but that of such a sorrow-stricken parent, can fully understand the bitterness of such suffering.

If children would wish to be, not “a heart-break” but a “joy and crown” to their parents, and requite them for all the love, and the self-forgetting, patient care, spent on them during the years when they could do nothing for themselves, let them look at the “Holy Child,” and try to follow His blessed steps.

Though He was Creator and Lord of all, yet when He became a helpless Infant, and was born of an earthly mother, He was her loving, gentle, and obedient Son, subject to her will, and that of him who stood in the place of a father. He worked for them, and gladdened their humble home, by His sweet and gracious presence. And when, after years of labour and suffering, His heavenly Father’s will was accomplished, and His great work was all but over; in the midst of His cruel agonies, He cast His dying eyes on His mother, and with His dying breath, secured a home for her, in her latter years of loneliness and sorrow. Oh, let children take Him, the holy Son of Man, for their Pattern, and “obey their parents in all

things," as He did: "for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord," Col. iii. 20.

The fifth commandment, also takes in the duty of masters and servants to each other. Masters are to be just and kind to their servants, not grudging their fair wages, or exacting more work than they can rightly do. A good master and mistress will be careful of the health, and real wellbeing of their servants, whether belonging to the house or farm. They will watch over them to the utmost of their power, to see that they are not exposed to bad companionship, or evil examples. They will consider their servants as under their care, and take a kind and friendly interest in them; striving to teach the young and ignorant, their duty to God; arranging their work, so that they can have a little time every day, for reading the Bible, and the opportunity of going to church, at least once, every Sunday. If masters and mistresses would try to be real friends to their servants, feeling that they are accountable to God, for the way they treat them, surely they would be more satisfactory than they often are. They would do their work better, and more faithfully, for they would do it from love.

And servants should be obedient, "not only to good and gentle" masters and mistresses, "but also to the froward," 1 Peter ii. 18, for Christ's sake. They should learn to look higher, than their earthly masters, and do their work, "Not with



eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart," Eph. vi. 6 ; " Knowing that of the Lord they shall receive the reward of the inheritance : for they serve the Lord Christ," Col. iii. 24.

To the children of Israel, the promise of long life and prosperity in the land of Canaan, was held out to those, who should dutifully keep the fifth commandment ; honouring and obeying their parents. This promise shadows out the blessedness of those, who love and honour their Father in heaven, and " do His commandments." It is written, that " they shall have a right to the tree of life," Rev. xxii. 14 ; and that is, life everlasting.

We come now to the sixth commandment, which is, " Thou shalt do no murder." That seems very plain. You maybe think, that if you haven't just kept all the other commandments, at least you've kept *that* one ; nobody can bring up *that* one against you. Well, let us see about it. The sixth commandment was not given on mount Sinai, for the *first* time. Don't you remember how we read in the book of Genesis ; that after the flood, when Noah and his family, and all the birds and beasts, came out of the ark into the earth, which had been purified and cleansed by the waters of the deluge, from the horrible crimes and torrents of blood, that had soiled and polluted it ; the Lord gave Noah a distinct and positive law, in clear and unmistakeable words, against taking away human life ? Be-

cause man had been made in the image of God; and though that image had been ruined and defaced by sin, it was in the power of God's Spirit to restore it; and therefore man's life, was to be looked upon as a sacred thing; not to be lightly and wantonly taken away.

And God said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," Gen. xi. 6; and the sixth commandment, was only a repetition of the old law against murder. Now, what is murder? Not the mere taking away of human life: because, as you have just heard, man's life may be justly and properly taken away, at the command of God Himself; by sentence of the law against murder,—or life may be taken in battle, by the sword of the enemy,—or it may be taken by the hand of a friend or brother, by some sorrowful mischance. None of these are murder. These are but the acts of the hand, whereas murder comes out of the heart; it is the awful fruit of bad passions, often long-indulged; envy, jealousy, hatred, covetous desire of money, and such like. Murder is the act of the hand, carrying out the desire of the heart. Man's evil heart, helped on by the tempting devil, gives birth to all those sinful and accursed passions, and nurses them, till they grow too strong to be kept in; and they break out into deeds of open violence, or slow, stealthy, secret poisoning, or sneaking, cowardly, midnight assassination; stabbing in the dark, or shooting from behind a hedge;

robbing a fellow-creature of his life, from the low, wretched, vulgar, greedy desire of some paltry, miserable gain; or the indulgence of a fierce thirst of revenge, for perhaps some fancied wrong. All these, and many, many other such acts, of unbridled passion, or wicked unhallowed desires, are *murder* in the eye of man, in the eye of the law; but, my brethren, the indulgence of the hateful passions themselves, is murder in the holy eye of *God*, though they never should go so far as to take away life. The word of God says, "He that hateth his brother, is a *murderer*; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. And surely he is a murderer of the deepest dye, who, by his godless example, and immoral, wicked, teaching, has led a fellow-creature into vice and crime; perhaps destroying his victim both in body and soul.

Then, my brethren, remembering that every secret thought and desire of our hearts, lies open and bare before God's eye, without any cloak or covering, can we any of us venture to say again, that we have never broken the sixth commandment? Dare we plead, that, whatever else we may have done, at least we are no murderers? No, in truth, we cannot; because our own hearts would condemn us, and bring before our memories, the many hard, unkind, covetous, envious feelings, and angry passions we have allowed to rise up, awakening hatred and ill-will against our neighbours;

passions that but for the restraining mercy of God, might have led us on to open crime. Our hearts have in them, by our fallen nature, the seeds of all evil; and if we would not have them spring up, and bring forth poisonous and deadly fruit, we must apply daily for the Holy Spirit's strength to root them up; and to the cleansing blood of Jesus, to wash out all their stains. Let this be the daily prayer of each one, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. Then we shall learn something of the loving spirit that "envieth not, and thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5; we shall have something of the mind of Him who "came not to destroy men's lives," Luke ix. 56, but to lay down His own, even for His enemies. Let us "consider Him," and be thankful that He has kept this, and every other commandment, in our place.

The seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." You all know what the words mean; and it does not seem necessary to say anything on the command itself, except to remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ looks farther than the outward conduct; and He says that men and women cannot indulge in unchaste, impure looks and thoughts, without committing that horrible sin in their hearts. God's holy commandments reach the heart; and in His sight, it is not

enough that you keep clear of the act itself, you are to avoid everything that might lead to it.

This subject is one of such deep importance to the well-being of all among us, my friends; that however painful to speak of, it must not be passed over in silence, when we are considering the ten commandments, as the rule, God has given us to live by; for the fact seems to be, and a sad and awful fact it is, that among the working-classes, in the cottage homes of our people, the seventh commandment is very little thought of at all; if we may judge by the behaviour of the multitudes, both of men and women, who go on exactly as if no such law had ever been given, and as if they had nothing to do, with either modesty or shame. And it is lamentable, to see how little the parents sometimes think, of their children's misconduct; it is very sad, to hear mothers speak of the consequence of their daughters' sin and dishonour, as a "misfortune," a thing that was "very unlucky," instead of very wicked.

Surely, if fathers and mothers would not treat the matter so lightly, but take the guilt and shame of their sons and daughters more seriously to heart; there might not be, in our country, so many young men without truth and honour; so many young women with ruined characters; nor so many marriages made, too late, to save the real respectability of either party.

My friends, I beg of you to think this matter over,

very seriously. Can a young man possibly think that he is committing no crime, when he lets his cruel selfishness lead him on, to take advantage of the feelings, and folly, of a girl he keeps company with; rob her of honour and good name, and then break his promise, perhaps solemnly given, and desert her? Should not common, manly feeling, make him ashamed to be guilty of such base treachery, towards one who trusted him? And even if the girl do not wait to be wooed, but shew herself ready to meet him half way; is that any excuse for him? Ought not a young man, who has any proper sense of modesty and self-respect, to shrink back in disgust, from a woman whose behaviour shews plainly, that she has neither one nor other? Such a woman is not fit to be an honest man's wife, and with anything else, he should have nothing to do. Every young man ought to know, that he degrades himself, when he dishonours a woman. It must be so: the sin has left its stain on him; his conscience tells him he is neither honest, nor upright, for he has wronged one who trusted him: and the evil may not stop there.

A man marries a woman, after they had both forgotten what was due to themselves, and to one another. She may keep faithful to him in their married life, but how can she bring up his children, as they should be? She, who cared for her own purity so little, is not likely to be a careful guardian of theirs, or to know how to train them, in

habits of modesty, and propriety. The sons and daughters grow up, with very loose notions of self-respect, and self-restraint; and do in their turn, as their parents did before them; and who can wonder?

Our young people seem to know very little what true love is. If they had any right feeling about it, they could never go on, as so many do. There can be no *true* love without respect. A true, manly lover, honours the girl he has set his heart on; and when engaged to be married to her, would no more think of taking a liberty with her, himself, than he would let any other man, do so. And he would love her all the better as his wife, for having respected her as his promised bride. The married home will be all the happier, where the time of courtship has been modest and pure.

And, oh! that girls would only know their real happiness: and not give way to the love of vulgar show and finery in their dress, and avoid all bold and light-headed familiarity with men; but take as much pains, to make themselves worthy of a good man's affection, as they now do, to court the notice and admiration of idle followers. Then, instead of being objects of blame and pity, to all right-minded persons; they might be honoured and respected wives, in whom the hearts of their husbands might safely trust; and mothers, whose children would bless them through life, for the holy teaching which never was forgotten en-

tirely, and oftentimes hindered them from falling into sin. Why, why should such wives and mothers, be so seldom met with among our people?

My brethren, do we not all know that the seventh commandment, in its full meaning, is dishonoured and disobeyed, to a fearful extent, in every part of our land ; in its country parishes and villages, as well as in its crowded cities ? We do all know of this dreadful evil ; but who knows how to mend it ? Something surely might be done by parents. The blessing is promised to those, who try in humble faith, to “train up their children in the way they should go, that when they are old, they shall not depart from it.” Then, dear friends, what a serious responsibility, rests on the fathers and mothers of our young people ! It is not often that such sad things as have been spoken of, happen in families, where the parents are really Christian people ; and that shews how very much might be done, by careful bringing up at home ; by training the children from the very beginning, in habits of decency and modesty. It is unhappily true ; that cottage homes are, far too often, ill provided with proper night accommodation for a family. There is generally not room enough, for the separation between the boys and girls, which there ought to be, if the young people are to be brought up, in those ways of modest propriety towards each other, which would help very much to keep them virtuous and pure through life.



That is too true : but still a great deal *might* be done in that direction, that is not done. A really Christian mother, would make very different sleeping arrangements for her sons and daughters, when past infancy, in the very same cottage, where a careless, unthinking woman, would leave them all together, and so hinder their ever learning the habits of decency and self-respect, which are so great a help, in keeping them chaste and modest when they grow up. And, my friends, another thing. Remember, that if your children are to be shamefaced and modest in their behaviour, they must be taught from the first, to use none but pure and proper language. Loose, immoral, coarse words, should never be allowed : as much as possible, they should be kept from ever hearing them. Profligate, bad conduct in others, should never be lightly spoken of before them ; and if they are used to hear nothing but what is decent and good at home, the young ones will learn to hate, and be disgusted, with what is abominable and vile.

St Paul forbids all “filthiness and foolish talking,” Eph. v. 4,—all improper and coarse jesting, between young men and women, or among women themselves,—for that is sure to break down and destroy, the feelings of modesty and self-respect, which both men and women ought to cherish, and prize most dearly in themselves, and in each other ; and which would keep within careful and safe bounds, the natural liking that young people have,

for the society of each other, and hinder anything like improper and dangerous familiarity, between them.

The hearts, and minds, and manners of children, require not only a mother's anxious care, but her constant prayers; if she would have them grow up to be the comfort and blessing of their homes.

Spirit of purity and truth! we must come to Thee. We must ask Thee to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and to guide our feet, into the way of God's commandments; following the footsteps of Jesus!



## EXODUS XX.

**WE** must now, my brethren, say a few words about the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." That is easily remembered. The plain meaning of this command is familiar to you all. It is a foundation stone of human society, that what a man has, is his own; not to be meddled with, or taken away, by others. The eighth commandment forbids, not only the unlawful taking possession of anything belonging to another, but also the injuring or destroying our neighbour's property. Strict laws have been made in every civilised country, against stealing, or in any way hurting what belongs to others. The sacredness of property is perfectly well understood among us, and generally respected. That person is looked on as very dishonest, who would go out in the dark, and help himself to any portion of his neighbour's goods, however open and unprotected they might be. Stealing is looked on as a crime, by every one. There are few people who would not be angry, on being taxed with it; and

yet, if we venture to say that the eighth commandment is seldom broken among us ; it is because we don't think enough about it, or see all that it really takes in. There are acts of dishonesty openly practised, which don't seem to be thought stealing, at all. For example, there are many persons employed by others, who would never think of touching money or goods, entrusted to their care, and who believe themselves to be perfectly honest, and who are so, so far as not taking anything, that does not belong to them ; and yet these very people don't mind wasting their employer's time ; spending a great deal of the time that he is paying them for, in their own business or pleasure. They don't make it a point of conscience, to use their employer's time faithfully : in such a thing as going an errand, they are not careful to go and come back, as fast as they can, that they may get to their work again. Young men who would not rob their master's till, or think of taking anything that belonged to him, for themselves, never remember, that by late rising and idleness, they are in fact robbing their master or employer, of that which he has paid for, and has a right to ; their precious time, and "time is money's worth," as we all ought to know. And again, young women engaged as dressmakers, are often careless of the materials given for their work. Sometimes they don't take pains, to make the stuff go as far as it ought, or as far as it would, if they were cutting

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it for themselves; and they never consider that they are robbing their employers, by wasting the time they are paid for, in idle talk, or by carelessly misusing what has been provided. They would be very much affronted if you were to tell them so, but yet, what else is it? We are not speaking now of those, who slyly take off, or keep back for their own purposes, a bit of what does not belong to them; but of those young people who fancy themselves honest, because they wouldn't do such a thing as that; never considering that wilful waste of either time, or materials, is dishonesty. Once more, a party of village lads would be much affronted, if they were suspected of stealing, out of a stable, or poultry yard; but they would think nothing of breaking into a neighbour's garden, robbing his fruit, and damaging his trees; and that is not to be called stealing, it is only a boyish exploit, that they plume themselves upon, and are ready to do over again, provided they got clear off, without being caught, last time. Then there are many paltry dishonesties in trading; making things seem more, or better than they are, for the sake of private gain. Now it may seem to many persons, that all these are only *small* things, and that it is hard, to call them stealing; but, my friends, we may learn a great lesson, from little things. Remember, that in the sight of God, there is no such thing as a little sin; if you break His holy law in the very least, you break it altogether.

“If a man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ;” and the very smallest sin, has needed the Saviour’s blood, to wash it away. Mind, it is not the “*how much*” you disobey, it is the disobeying *at all*, that makes the sin. Sin does not lie in quantity, or in number, but in principle. You may think Eve did not take much, when she plucked the forbidden fruit; but what came of it? By that one act, she disobeyed God; and she didn’t need to gather any more, to ruin us all. By that one disobedience “sin came into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on us all,” for we are all Eve’s children, we all sinned when she did.

That seems very sad, my brethren; and hard too, you may think, that the unborn children should suffer, for the sins of their first parents; but sad as it is, it has a good and a glorious side to it; for if we have lost, by belonging to the first Adam, we gain far more, by belonging to the Second, the Lord Jesus Christ. His perfect obedience is counted to His people, just as much as Adam’s sin was, and more: for if they became sinners through Adam’s sin, they lose that, by believing in Jesus, and are made good and holy, through His perfect goodness; and they can never lose that, for His righteousness is “an everlasting righteousness,” Ps. cxix. 142, and “His mercy endureth for ever.” So, never let us think again of any sin, as only a little matter, for it is disobedi-

ence to the holy law of the Great King, and it required an awful, an infinite price, to redeem the world from its effects.

When we consider the eighth commandment, in all that it requires, as well as in all that it forbids, we shall find that it is not so easy to keep, as it looks at first, when we hear the words, "Thou shalt not steal."

The Lord Jesus Christ mentions theft, as one of the evil things that come out of the heart of man; and we know that theft, is only the full-blown blossom, of the bitter weeds of envy and covetousness, which spring there, as in their native soil, and grow up rank and strong, if they are not cut down, and rooted up.

The heart itself must be made new, my brethren, for the old one is very hard, and "desperately wicked." No one can know or believe, how bad it is, till the Holy Spirit shews him the plague of his own heart, and teaches him how God hates sin, and how dear it cost the Saviour, to put it away from His people. Then the man says to himself, "I will arise, and go to my Father;" I will pray for faith in the pardoning blood; I will cry unto the Lord, "Let thy tender mercies come unto me. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness," Ps. cxix. 77, 36. Then "he that stole, will steal no more," Eph. iv. 28, but will labour diligently with his hands, that he may have something to spare for them that need;

he will pray for more of the kindly and Christian spirit, which would make him a good neighbour to all around him—loving those that love the Lord, with a brother's affection, and trying to do good even “to the unthankful and the evil,” Luke vi. 35; and that is the spirit that will best keep the eighth commandment.

My brethren, the worst kind of stealing has not yet been mentioned; and that is, the robbing one's neighbour of his character and good name, by evil speaking and backbiting. But this may be best considered under the ninth commandment, which is, as you remember, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

The three last commandments forbid the evil acts of murder, adultery, and theft; now this one forbids all lying and evil speaking. And surely, when we think of the wickedness, and mischief, and misery, that the tongue causes, and has caused, ever since the world began, we can well see how needful it was, there should be a commandment expressly directed against it. The apostle James calls the tongue “a fire, a world of iniquity: . . . that defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell,” James iii. It is set agoing by the devil, who is the “father of lies,” and whose only joy it is, to work mischief and evil, in men, and by them. The devil well knows what a mighty engine of wickedness the tongue is; more untameable than the



most savage beasts—"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Those are very strong words, but they are used by the Spirit of truth. And surely, if we considered but a very small part, of the guilt, and wretchedness, and misery, that have come, and do come every day, from the ill tongues of men and women, we should have to confess that they are not stronger than is true. For oh! to think of the hearts that have been broken, the homes that have been made miserable, the characters that have been ruined, the fair hopes that have been blasted, the just expectations that have been disappointed; and all by the tongue! Ay, and such things are happening every day! We must think a little about this, brethren; for we are told that "a false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish," Prov. xix. 9.

The ninth commandment forbids false witness against our neighbour, whether in the witness-box before the magistrate, or, if applied to in private; the saying anything against him, which we know to be untrue. That is the plain meaning of not bearing false witness. But God's command goes farther than that, though its words don't. In its spirit, it forbids all evil speaking; as well as lying and slandering. Over and over again, our Lord's apostles tell us to keep clear of it. St Paul says that Christians are not only to "put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour;" he adds, "Let all evil speaking be put away from

you," Eph. iv. 25, 31; and again, "Speak evil of no man"; and St Peter tells them to "lay aside all evil speakings." Now what is evil speaking? Is it telling lies of our neighbours? saying what we know is not true, about any one's character or doings? No, brethren, that's not its meaning. Listen now, and I will read some beautiful and true words, that will make it very clear to you.

"Speak evil of no man"; as plain a command as "Thou shalt do no murder." What is evil speaking? It is not the same as lying or slandering. All a man says, may be as true as the Bible, and yet the saying of it be evil speaking; for evil speaking is neither more nor less, than speaking ill of an absent person; relating (or telling) something evil, which was really done or said by one who is not present, when it is related.

"In our language, this is also, by an extremely proper name, called 'backbiting.' Nor is there any material difference between this, and what we usually style 'tale bearing.' If the tale be told in a soft and quiet manner (perhaps with some expressions of good will to the person, and a hope that things may not be quite so bad), then we call it "whispering." But in whatever way it be done, the thing is the same, if we relate to another, the fault of a third person, when he is not there to answer for himself."

My friends, we may be ready to cry, Surely evil speaking must be the commonest of all sins! Who

among us is quite free from it, for a single day? for if we don't speak it, we listen to it; and we must remember that "the conscious receiver of stolen goods, is as bad as the thief." We are to *hear* evil of no man; for when we listen, we encourage the speaking it. "If there were no hearers, there would be no speakers of evil." Now this concerns us all. We must take it home to ourselves, each one of us, for we are all guilty of evil speaking, though we may not do it from the wicked desire to do harm to others. A great deal of evil speaking arises from pure idleness, and love of talking, and of having something to tell, that maybe other people don't know; and a world of mischief is often done, and many a heart is made sore, by the silly, idle gossiping, that seems to be more than meat and drink, to far too many among us, both men and women; but particularly among the women, whose work lies mostly at home, and who have more chances of meeting their neighbours, and more time for talking, than the men, who are later out at their work. My friends, I would ask you; though I am sure, in no unkind spirit, Is it not true that when women get together, they commonly talk about their neighbours? I believe St Paul thought so, when he said that young women "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not," 1 Tim. v. 13. So you see, the love of gos-

sipping is nothing new. The worst of it is, that when women meet to talk, they are very apt to let their tongues make too free with their neighbours' characters; they are far too ready to suspect that something must be wrong with them, or to put the worst face, on any matter they don't quite understand. It is very sad and painful, to notice how soon feelings of envy and jealousy, are roused up against a neighbour, to whom any little common kindness may have been shewn by those above them; what bitter speeches are made about it; what unkind and spiteful whisperings are heard; what envious hints thrown out, that if this one, and that other, had been better known; maybe they wouldn't have got so much; and so on.

And again, another evil that comes from the gossiping of idle and mischievous tongues, (and those are not always women's), is the continual raising, and spreading of false reports, and ill-natured stories. For it is odd, how seldom the tales that go about that way, are good-natured, or to any one's advantage. A very simple matter, when first mentioned, is caught up by some one else, (who, perhaps, had only half heard it,) and thoughtlessly told over again, with a little difference, or a little addition; till at last, it is swelled into a very serious affair, and causes an immense deal of mischief. And that's not wonderful, for any one might know, if he would only think, what a difficult thing it is, to repeat a story correctly, to

tell a thing over again, exactly as it was told to you. But the idle tale has done its mischief all the same, and it may never be entirely put away.

My brethren, think of these things, for they are very serious. King Solomon warns us against whispering and tale-bearing, when he says, "A froward man soweth strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends," Prov. xvi. 28; "he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends," Prov. xvii. 9, and how painfully true that is, many an aching heart can tell! We are told that one of the things the Lord hates, is "a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren," Prov. vi. 19.

It is not possible to point out all the evils, that have been caused by idle tongues; for mind, men and women don't need to be spiteful and ill-natured, to do a great deal of harm; silly, idle tattling will do it; and cause heart-burning, and make mischief enough, to trouble the peace and quiet of any neighbourhood; but surely it is well worth while, to inquire if any remedy can be found, any cure for the evil.

I do not believe that there is any real cure, for the evils caused by the tongue, except a thorough change of the heart. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that "a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart,

bringeth forth that which is evil ; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh," Luke vi. 45 ; and God says, " My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine ; yea, my reins shall rejoice when thy lips shall speak right things," Prov. xxiii. 15, 16. Doesn't that shew that the heart must be right, before the lips can speak right ? as the spring must be clean and pure, before it can send forth fresh and wholesome streams. Then where can we go, but to Him, whose heart was a well-spring of love, and whose words were full of grace and truth ? Let us ask Him to make our hearts pure and right, by His cleansing Spirit ; that for His sake, we may love our neighbours, as we love ourselves, and that in all our dealings with one another, we may " open our mouths with wisdom," and have " the law of kindness" in our tongues. So we should strive to keep the ninth commandment in its spirit, and be as careful of our neighbour's good name, as if it were our own.

And now we come to the tenth and last commandment ; and it seems the most important of all the second table ; for the keeping of the tenth, would ensure the keeping of all the rest, that concern our duty to our neighbour. And while in the words, the others only forbid outward acts, the tenth commandment goes at once straight to the heart, and forbids a wrong wish, or an evil desire.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

You see, this commandment can only be broken in the *heart*; and only God, who looks at the heart, can know if you are breaking it. You may be breaking it every day of your lives, without your fellow-men knowing anything about it. It is only when the covetous desires break out into action, that human law can step in, and punish the act; but in God’s sight, the coveting what is another’s, is *sin*. And, my brethren, mind this: the breaking of the tenth commandment, is the cause of nearly all the crime, and wickedness, and misery of our fallen world. If men and women *truly* kept the tenth commandment, this earth would be like heaven begun: there would be nothing but kindness and good-will between man and man.

But they don’t, they can’t keep it; and the earth is filled with crime, and “mourning, and lamentation, and woe,” because of it.

“Thou shalt not covet.” Now what is it, to covet? Is it not to wish unduly for something forbidden? to look with a longing eye, at something belonging to your neighbour, till the longing look grows into a passionate desire to have it? Then if that be so, coveting is the root of all sin against our fellow-men. Why do men commit murder, or adultery, or theft, but because they

want something that belongs to others? Jezebel murdered Naboth, because her husband coveted his vineyard, which the other wouldn't sell. And coveting leads to envy, and envy leads to evil-speaking, and all uncharitable feelings against our neighbours. And that's not all: the Lord our God says that "covetousness is idolatry," Col. iii. 5. It gives the thing we long after, the first place in our hearts; and that belongs by right to God alone. So you see, that all evil against God and man, comes from covetousness. The Lord Jesus solemnly warns us to beware of it. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth," Luke xii. 15. A man may possess so much in this world, that he doesn't know what to long for next, and yet he may be absolutely starving before God: his soul without a covering—without a Saviour. Let us take the Lord's warning, and "beware of covetousness." St Paul seems to say that he should never have known what a sinner he was, if it hadn't been for this commandment, "Thou shalt not covet": for he found out by it, how constantly he was longing after forbidden things, and that shewed him the desperate wickedness of his heart.

Now, brethren; you see plainly, don't you, that God's commandments not only forbid every evil action, and every evil word, but that they go deeper, and forbid every bad thought, and every



evil desire? We say again, the laws of men can only deal with outward things. There must be a crime committed, before the law can take notice of it; but the holy law of God "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12; and while it forbids all open crime, it as clearly forbids every secret longing—every wicked wish that leads to it. It demands, and will be satisfied with nothing short of perfect holiness, in heart and life. And it could not do otherwise, for it is the will of a God of absolute holiness. The Psalmist might well say, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad"; no wonder the children of Israel were terrified when they heard it. They saw the flashing lightnings, and the clouds of smoke; they heard the rolling thunder, and the piercing trumpet call, and they fell back from the awful mountain, "They removed and stood afar off;" but when the voice of the Lord uttered His holy commandments in their ears, they could bear it no longer: "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." They drew near to Moses as the mediator, and entreated him to stand between them and their God, who, they felt, was so awful in His holiness, that they could not bear His voice, or His presence, for they knew they were sinners before Him. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your

faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off: and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

The trembling multitude stood at a distance—they felt that the mount where God was, was holy ground, which they durst not tread on; but Moses drew near on his people's behalf, to hear what the Lord should say; and oh, my brethren, what gracious words came from the thick darkness, what mercy was made known to poor sinful men! He who had just given forth the "fiery law," Deut. xxxiii. 2, in all its majesty and purity amid the terrors of Sinai, (that awful law which demanded a perfect obedience; forgiving no shortcomings, making allowance for no infirmities, but sternly cursing every one who failed to keep it completely at all times). He, the just and awful Lawgiver, now speaks in kind and gentle tones, of an altar and a sacrifice. "An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shall sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Now brethren, what had that, what had the altar, and the offerings, to do with the ten commandments? with the holy law that had just been given? Just this: it was as though God said, I know that weak sinful men cannot keep my commandments; they cannot obey my holy, and just, and good law, with anything

like perfection, and the law can put up with nothing less: if men are left to themselves, there is nothing but ruin before them, for eternal death is the just award of disobedience. But I will shew them a way—the only way, to escape from death and hell, and to find rest and happiness in heaven. I have promised to send my own Son, not only to keep the law that men should have kept, with a perfect, unsinning obedience, but to give His life up to Almighty justice, to make amends for man's having sinned. And till the right time comes for my Son to appear on earth, let my chosen people Israel build an altar to me, and bring the bleeding offering from flocks and herds, to keep them always in mind of the awful fact, that sin cannot be put away without blood, even the blood of the holy Lamb of God; who willingly comes to die, that God may be glorified while He shews mercy to sinners—that He may be seen to be just and true, while He pardons the ungodly.

My brethren, do you see how the lowly altar of earth, with the bleeding lamb burning on it, would speak peace to the troubled conscience of the children of Israel, and comfort their hearts, shivering under a sense of their own sin, and of God's awful holiness and purity? Do you see how their only hope of pardon and safety lay in the blood? and how the more they felt their unworthiness, the more simply and earnestly they would go before the altar, and plead that God would pardon them,

for the sake of that Blood, which was to be shed for them?

We cannot know *how* clearly the children of Israel understood what the bleeding sacrifice meant; some of them, we are sure, looked forward to a coming Saviour. But, my brethren, the question for *you* is, Do *you* understand God's way of salvation? do you see that you cannot deal with the All Holy God yourselves, but must have a Mediator, a go-between, just as they had? and that the only Mediator between God and sinners, is the Son of God and man, Christ Jesus? Do you clearly understand that, as you cannot get to heaven by keeping the ten commandments yourselves, your only way is to trust in the Lord Jesus, as your Saviour and Friend? Then He takes all your sins, and gives you His goodness, His perfect obedience, instead. And when you have to appear before the throne of God, though you have nothing good of your own to shew, though you have not kept even one commandment aright, you can point to Jesus, and say that He has kept them all *for you*, and has washed all your sins away; and will the Father receive you for *His* sake? . . . Ah, that plea is never put forward in vain! can you see the pearly gates open? can you hear, amid the harps and the anthems of heaven, the gracious words, "Come ye blessed, . . . Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. . . . Enter into the joy of your Lord"?

Do you remember, brethren, what the angels sang, when they brightened the plain of Bethlehem with their glorious presence, the night the Saviour was born? It was, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men." And we have just seen, how that was to be brought about: by the Son of God coming as a Man, to obey His holy law in our place, and to die because we had broken it.


And He did it. Through his whole life, He obeyed perfectly, without a flaw, without a failure, in thought, or word, or deed. He did it through *love*. He did it to bring glory to God, and to give peace to men. And then He died. His work on earth is done; His sinless obedience is wrought out for His people, and soon the glory will come, and peace and good will shall follow: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God," Hab. ii. 14, and "great shall be the peace of His children," Isa. liv. 13. The angel hosts shall rejoice to see their holy words fulfilled; heaven shall come down to earth, the Lord Himself, the Prince of peace, shall dwell with men; and His holy law, the law of perfect love, shall be the law of His kingdom. "For God is love," and His people shall see Him as He is, and be made like Him!

## EXODUS XX. XXI. XXII.

**WE** have now looked a little, at each of the ten commandments, and have seen that they take in a vast deal more; than one might think at first, from just reading the words.

In words, the commandments are ten ; in spirit, they are just two. The Lord Jesus Christ took them all in, when He said to the Jewish lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37, 40. Keep these, and you keep the whole law of God, in all its length and breadth.

But who *can* keep them, you may say? Who that knows the least thing about himself, can pretend to say that he ever *has* loved his God with a perfect heart, and loved his neighbour as well as he loves himself? or that he ever *could*, do either the one or the other? Then why was such an impossible law set before us? Why were com-



mandments given to men, that they had no chance of being able to obey? That is exactly what we need to know, my brethren, and what we must try to find out from the Bible.

We there read, that when man was created, he was made in the image of God. Holiness, God's will; was written on his conscience. He was under that will or law, because he was a creature; and as a creature, he had to obey his Creator. Adam knew that eternal life was the reward of obedience, and eternal death the penalty of disobedience. So long as he kept innocent, he obeyed God's will naturally; not because it was a law to him, but because his heart was full of love to his heavenly Father; and obedience was his happiness, just as it is the happiness of the holy angels now. But the moment Adam became a sinner by disobeying, he lost the love of God out of his heart, and got slavish fear instead; he lost both the power, and the wish to obey His will; and through him, man was ruined entirely. He was no longer God's dear son, His happy subject; he had fallen from his high estate, and was become, like his first father, a disobedient, wicked rebel; but he was a creature still,—he was still under law, the will of his Maker. And that "holy, just, and good law," could not be lowered, because the creature had fallen. It was a perfect law still. It could not be otherwise; because it was a part, as it were, of the high and holy God. It was not to fall in its

demands, because man had fallen from his power to obey. So God's law remained the same ; perfectly good, and just, and holy, like Him whose will it is ; and men remained sinners, born in the sinful likeness of their fallen parents.

And time rolled on, and the holy law of God was nearly forgotten in the earth. Men's consciences were blunted and hardened by sin; even those whom God had mercifully called to walk in His holy ways, had but a low notion of what was right. You remember how Abraham forgot God's law, when he twice tried to save himself, by telling falsehoods, and bidding his wife tell them too. So did Isaac. Jacob forgot that God's holy eye was on him, when he deceived his father, and cheated his brother. His wicked sons thought not of God's law, when they stole away their young brother, and sold him for a slave, because they envied and hated him; almost breaking their poor old father's heart, by their cruel lies. But Joseph remembered it. He was faithful and true, in all that was committed to his care. He refused to commit adultery, because it was sin against God ; he patiently bore false accusation, without accusing again; and when thrown into the dungeon, he shewed his kindness to his fellow-prisoners, and did to them, as he would, they had done to him. In all that, Joseph kept the law of his God ; but there were few like *him*, till the Greater than Joseph came.



And then followed the long captivity in Egypt; when the children of Israel, God's chosen people, lived as slaves, among heathen who knew nothing of God and His law. They learned the evil ways of the land of their bondage; and got low and earthly notions of God, from being used to see the Egyptians worshipping idols, and brute animals, and creeping things; and their own God, the God of their fathers, was almost forgotten among them; till at last, the Lord brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and led them into the wilderness; where He taught them by His Providences, and guided them by His Presence. And now, in His good time, He has published His holy law in their ears: and that it may not again be forgotten, it was written by the finger of God Himself, on two tables of stone.

But where was the use of giving it again, when no human being had ever kept it perfectly, or could keep it?

The law was given, to teach men that they had to do, with a God of absolute holiness. It was given, to teach them what wretched sinners they are in themselves; to shew how black, man's corruption is, when seen in the clear, white light of God's holiness; and that, as has been said, "men might find out, how crooked their own ways were, by laying them along the straight edge of God's commandments." The moral law, by shewing men something, of the awful purity and holiness of

God, made them see how deep they had sunk, how far they had fallen. Then the perfect law could only bring despair to the hearts of sinners, when they listened to the stern curses, that followed the smallest failure in perfect obedience? When the awful words sounded in their ears, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10, what could they feel, but that that dread curse was hanging over them all, and that there was no escape? And it was true.

The law of God, so pure and holy, *could* do nothing but curse sinful man; for it was all holiness and justice,—it knew nothing about mercy. It could neither forgive, nor excuse, nor make the smallest allowance for human frailty. It is true, indeed, that keeping the commandments, would have led to heaven; as the Lord Jesus Christ told the Jewish lawyer, who said to Him, "Master, What shall I do, to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live," Luke x. 25-58,—keep these commandments, and you shall have eternal life. The Lord knew that the man wasn't in earnest: He saw that he had not come, as a

trembling sinner, anxious to know how he could be saved. If he had come that way, he would have got a different answer. The loving Saviour would have said to him, "Come unto Me"; "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," John xiv. 6. But the lawyer had no good object, in asking the question. He only wanted to try Jesus, and hear what he would say; so he was directly sent back to the law: You know the commandments; keep them, and you shall live. If the man thought seriously about that answer, he could not help knowing, that he had no chance of eternal life on those terms. His conscience told him, that he could not keep God's commandments. And what other chance had he? He might have gone to the Saviour, confessing humbly that he could not keep God's holy law; he might have cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief;" "God be merciful to me a sinner;" "Lord, save me, I perish"! and the compassionate Saviour would not have told him again, to go and keep the commandments; for He never sends a seeking soul, empty away.

Now, my brethren, you see the grand use of the moral law—the ten commandments. To be "a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ," Gal. iii. 24. To make helpless sinners feel, that Jesus is their only shelter from its curse. To teach them—that though they had nothing but condemnation, to look for from the holy law, since "death is the

wages of sin," Rom. vi. 23—yet that God loved them, even when they were His enemies; and had sent His own Son, to bear the punishment of their disobedience, and to die in their place, that they might be free. And now, those who love Jesus have nothing to fear; the law cannot curse them any more, for it was laid on Him instead. Besides that, Jesus, as a Man, in our nature, kept God's commandments thoroughly and perfectly, all His life on earth, that His obedience might be reckoned to His people; and the justice of God is fully satisfied, and looks on them, as having kept the law entirely, because Jesus did it, for them. And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1; they are safe for ever, because they believe in Him.

Now, my friends, don't you see how it is, that you need not seek to get to heaven, by trying to keep the commandments? If you get there, it will be none of your winning. Isn't it perfectly clear to you, that you can do nothing in the very least, to *save* your souls? I hope so, for it is God's truth. But listen again; for it is an awful thing to make a mistake about, as so many do.

St Paul says, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23. You know very well, the difference between wages and a gift. Wages, you have earned yourselves, they are no matter of

favour, but your just due, for work done. But a present, is a matter of favour entirely; not a thing you've any right to look for, it is at the pleasure of the giver, to bestow or not. All that you know very well. Now, both the first man Adam, and the second Man Christ Jesus, *did* work, and each earned the wages due for it; and what they did, was done, not for themselves alone, but for all who were to come after them. What did Adam do? He broke God's law, the law of obedience; and earned, as the just wages of his sin, *death*; death of the body, here, and of the soul, hereafter; and all his children have succeeded to that sad inheritance. What did Jesus Christ do? He kept God's commandments perfectly, and earned eternal life, as the just wages of His obedience. And He did more: He put Himself in fallen man's place; and had the fearful wages that were due to sin, paid to Him; He suffered death in our stead, and now we need have nothing to do, with eternal death. And He rose from the dead, to carry on His work in heaven. In all this, Jesus wrought not for Himself; He was working for us, in our very nature. He obeyed for us, He won heaven for us; and now it comes as a free gift from Him, to all the men, women, and children that will come to Him, and trust Him as their own Saviour.

My friends, will you not be among that blessed company? Will you not leave off thinking you can do something, to save yourselves, and put your

trust in Him, who has done all for you already, and who asks nothing but love in return ?

Remember, I pray you, what you have heard to-night—that God does not deal with you; He deals with Jesus Christ for you, as He dealt with Moses for the children of Israel. Jesus is the Mediator, the go-between; you can't get to heaven any other way, but through Him. He says, "I am the way . . . no man cometh to the Father but by me," John xiv. 6. The holy eye of God cannot look at sinners, or at any work of theirs, with any complacency; He only looks at His dear Son. He is well pleased with His work, and if you will but go to Jesus, and ask Him to save you, and to give you His obedience, as you've none of your own, God will look at you, and love you for His sake; and you won't be lost, disobedient, sinners any longer, but dear children, trying to please your kind and tender Father, who is watching over you. and correcting you, by His good Spirit, till He has made you fit for the holy home, that Jesus is preparing for His people.

Now you see what St Paul means, when he says, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," for we cannot please Him until we come to Jesus, and it is faith that leads us to Him. Our salvation does not depend on our *doing*, it depends on our *believing*, that is, on our faith; and saving faith, like every other good thing, comes from God. The Holy Spirit will teach us to believe on Jesus,

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if we ask Him, as He has done many and many a poor sinner, now in heaven.

But, my friends, you are not to go away now, with the notion that we have nothing to do, with the ten commandments. Though we have not to keep them, in order to get to heaven, we have to keep them, in order to live rightly on earth. Our great business here, as real Christians; is to become holy, that we may be like the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved God's law, and kept it without a fault, all His life; as a little Child, as a Boy, and as a young Man. He loved the Lord His God, with all His heart, and soul, and strength; and He loved His brethren of mankind, more than He loved Himself, when He laid down His life for them. And how shall we follow His steps, unless our hearts are filled with love to God, and our fellow-men? How shall we love our Saviour, unless we try to keep His commandments? The Law says, Keep the commandments; the Gospel says, Follow Christ; and that's just the same thing: for poor sinners find, that trying to follow Him, in His holy life, is the best way to keep the law; the more they love Him, the more holy they grow, in heart and life.

Try it then, brethren, try it for yourselves—go to the Lord Jesus; trust in Him as your Saviour, and you will find, that, while His finished work takes you to heaven, His Spirit will teach you to keep God's commandments, and live holy lives on

earth, till He calls you home, to be with Him for ever.

We read, that when the ten commandments had been spoken with awful solemnity, on mount Sinai, “and all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Though they had been sanctified by Moses, and had washed themselves, and their clothes, in token of purity; though all had been done that man could do, to make them fit for God’s presence, the people felt they could not bear it; they begged that they might not hear God’s awful voice any more, for they could not endure His strict and holy commandments; they felt that they must have a mediator, one to stand between them, in their trembling terror, and God, in His fearful holiness and power. They could not bear that God should deal directly with *them*; Moses must stand before Him, in their place, and deal with God on their behalf; for, guilty sinners as they were, they could not do it for themselves.

Now, my brethren, look here. Many and many a sinner, feels like the children of Israel, when he is first awaked from the sleep of sin, and worldliness, to know what a holy God he has to do with, and what a guilty sinner he is himself, unable to



think a good thought, or to do one deed as it ought to be done. He is terrified at God's being so very holy ; and longs for something to screen him from that awful Eye, which pierces him through and through, and makes him feel more and more guilty, and lost, and miserable.

Like the gaoler, who was so suddenly startled into the knowledge of his sin and danger ; such a one cries, trembling, " What must I do to be saved ? " Acts xvi. 30, and he hears that there is a Mediator, for poor sinners. There is One who has stood between guilty men, and their justly offended God ; there is a way to escape from the everlasting burnings : " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Moses, who stood between the Lord God, and the children of Israel, was a picture, but a very faint one, of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

Moses himself pointed Him out ; when he told the people, a little before his death, that the Lord had promised to send them a Prophet like to Moses himself, saying, " I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth ; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." That Prophet was Jesus Christ, my brethren ; oh, how shall any of us escape, if we die, neglecting Him ?

Jesus was like Moses, in standing, as he did, between the Lord and the people. He came in a lowly station from among themselves; a Man like them, but without sin. He had the same nature as men; was subject to trials, and temptations, and infirmities just as we are; and that made Him well able, to enter into all our feelings, and to sympathise with all our weaknesses; so that He was every way fitted to act for *us*.

But he who stands between two parties, must be able to feel and act for both; and so could Jesus. He was the Son of God Most High: His heart was filled with love to His Father, with burning zeal for God's glory, and for His holy law. He was altogether fit, to be the Mediator between God and man, because He had the nature of both, and could feel for both. He could do all that God's glory demanded, and all that was needful, for poor sinful men. The character of God, and the interests of men, were alike safe in His hands; for while He was "God over all," Rom. ix. 5, "One with the Father, He was our very Brother: "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." And beneath the arm of God's power, there throbbed in His bosom, the tender, loving, human heart, alive to every pang that can wound, and every temptation that can try, His weary, struggling brethren.

And with Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, God has dealt. He has acted on behalf of God and men. Everything that the great King could re-

quire from His subjects, Jesus has done : He gave a perfect obedience to the law, in all its strictness. The utmost penalty that a just and holy God could demand from His rebellious creatures, Jesus has paid : He gave up His life, forfeited by our transgressions. And to all that a Father's heart could claim from the children that He loved, Jesus, the Son of man, yielded a willing and delighting response. His whole being glowed with love to God ; His whole life was one act of spotless obedience to His will. From a child, He was always "about His Father's business." He cared neither for hunger, nor weariness, when He could work for Him. He was content to give up His own sinless will, that His Father's might be done ; and His last breath, spoke His unfailing confidence in His Father's love.

And what has He not done "for us men, and for our salvation"? When we were fallen, He pitied us ; while we were sinners, He died for us ; when we were enemies to God by wicked works, He has reconciled, and made us His friends ; when we had ruined ourselves, and had nothing to pay, He took our tremendous debt on Himself, and frankly forgave us all ; when we were gone astray, "stumbling on the dark mountains" of sin, Jer. xiii. 16, at a hopeless distance from God, He came to seek and to save the lost ones : and many a weary wanderer has been found and brought home, by His patient love and care : when He was on earth, He set us a per-

fect example how men should live ; He taught us how to love God, and our fellow-men ; He shewed us how the most hopeless and helpless sinners may be gathered in, by telling them that their heavenly Father loves them still, and is waiting for them to come home to Him, where he has a loving welcome for all. And Jesus is working for His people still, at God's right hand. He has sent down the Holy Spirit, to take His place here, and do for us, and in us, all that we need ; renewing our hearts, that we may leave off our evil ways, and love God, and keep His commandments ; while Jesus sits on the throne of grace, listening to our feeblest cry for help, and pleading for us, even to the uttermost. Surely none, not the greatest sinner, need be lost, while Jesus, the sinner's Friend is there ! My brethren, What *can* we do for Him ? How can we shew our love to such a Saviour ? to such a Friend ?

The two next chapters, are full of laws and directions, that the Lord gave for His people's guidance when they should reach their own country, the land of Canaan. They were spoken to Moses, when he went up into the thick darkness on mount Sinai, where God was ; and Moses was first to speak them in the ears of the people, and then to write them down, that they might not be forgotten nor lost ; but be taken care of, to be consulted at all times.

You know the Lord was not only the God, of the

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children of Israel, whom they were to worship; He was their King, that they were to obey in all earthly matters, as well. The will of their King, was to be the law of the land. First, we have a good many rules, about the way servants were to be treated. The children of Israel were to remember, that they had been servants themselves in the land of Egypt, and so were to shew fellow-feeling, and mercy, and kindness, in their dealings towards those who might be servants to them.

In those old days, household servants were all slaves, bought with money; and we see how careful the Lord was, to provide for their just and kind treatment, on the part of their masters. One law we must particularly notice. The Israelites were not to make any of their own countrymen, slaves for longer than six years. In the seventh year, the bondman was to go out a free man, without paying for his freedom: "If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him unto the door, or unto the door-post: and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve

him for ever." The man was a willing servant from that time.

Now this law, was not merely to teach us the relations between Hebrew masters and their slaves; it was to shew a wonderful, and striking type of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He came down to this world. We must glance at it by and by.

In looking over the laws, that were given to Israel; one can't help noticing the constant care, and tender consideration, that the Lord had for the poor and helpless. And it was just the same afterwards, when He came down to live in our world, for a while. He came as a poor Man, among the poor; feeling for their wants, healing their infirmities, gathering them round Him to hear the gospel of God's love, and forgiving the sins even of the abandoned and the wretched. The Lord was, and is, truly, the poor man's Friend.

We can only notice a few of the things, that the Lord commanded His people. They were to offer the first-fruits of all their substance to Him, in acknowledgment that all they possessed, came from His bounty. And the Lord reminds the children of Israel, that their first-born sons belonged to Him, in memory of His having spared them, when He destroyed the first-born of Egypt that night. But the people were to redeem their sons, by paying a fixed sum of money, which was

the same for all. Rich and poor were to pay alike, to shew that every soul is of the same value in God's sight, and that it cost the same precious Blood, to redeem them all. You have often heard it read, how Mary, the blessed young Jewish mother, took her First-born Son, the Holy Child Jesus, into the temple, and presented Him to the Lord. But she paid no redemption money for Him ; He was not to be redeemed ; He was to be the Lord's Servant for ever.

Jesus came to be the True, Willing Servant. He loved His Father, and He loved His church, His believing people, too dearly to draw back from the lifelong service He had entered on, for their sake ; and He carried it on through suffering, and shame, and agony, even to death. And that loving service goes on in heaven. He is continually pleading and praying for His people, till the last shall be brought home to God.

Jesus speaks of Himself as the Willing Servant, doing His Master's will. He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but His that sent Me," John vi. 38 ; "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work," John iv. 34 ; "I do always those things that please Him," John viii. 29 ; and God spoke of Jesus, as "My Servant, whom I uphold ; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth : I have put My Spirit upon Him," Isa. xlii. 1 ; and He says again, "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My

Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel ; I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My Salvation to the ends of the earth," Isa. xlix. 6.

See, my brethren, what a glorious work, the Lord Jesus, the Willing Servant, has before Him ! Oh, shall we not own Him and serve Him as our Master now ? and we shall share His glory for ever.






## EXODUS XXIII.

**WE** see, in the end of the last chapter, the reason why the Lord gave the children of Israel so many laws, and forbade them to do so many things. "Ye shall be holy men unto me." They had been chosen from among the nations, on purpose to be made a holy people, a people for God. The children of Israel were not holy, to begin with ; when the Lord called them out of Egypt. There was no good thing about them ; but they were the children of Abraham, whom God graciously called His "friend," and the Lord had promised him, that He would bless them, and make them His own people ; and we have seen, in this book of Exodus, how faithfully He has been keeping His promise. When Egypt was punished, the children of Israel were spared ; they were redeemed from death, because of the blood on their doors, and they were brought out of their cruel bondage, by the mighty hand of their God. He did everything for them. He was with them, when they passed through the waters ; and through the weary wilderness He led

them, feeding them with bread from heaven, and with water from the flinty rock. He strengthened them to fight against their enemies, and gave them victory in the battle; and now, He has given them His law. And why was all that? Just that they might grow into a holy people for God, different, and separate, from all the rest of the world.

Brethren, the history of the Jews is the Christian lesson book. Now listen. Why did the Son of God come down from heaven, and live obedient, and suffer, and die, and rise from the dead, and go back to heaven, and send down the Holy Spirit in His place? Why did He do all that? Just to gather around Him a family from among men, who should become a holy people to God, different and separate, from the rest of the world. That is what true Christians are. That is what you and I, are called to be. That is what we must be, if we mean to go to heaven. That is what we can't be of ourselves; but what we may be, since the Spirit of God is ready to make us.

The children of Israel were not chosen out of all the world, to be the Lord's people, because they were a good, or a great people, for they were "the fewest of all people;" or because God saw anything in them to please Him, for they were a stiff-necked and rebellious race, Deut. vii. 7. He chose them; why? Because He loved them, and had made a promise to their fathers. Now, notice. No man is converted, and made a child of God, because the



Lord sees that there is something good in that man; something that He likes; that will grow holy with time, and pains, and good teaching. It is just the other way. There is nothing, and can be nothing, in any natural man, to please a holy God, but everything to displease, and vex Him; and man has neither the will, nor the power to make himself any better. No careful training, nor enlightened education, can change his heart, and “bring a clean thing out of an unclean,” Job xiv. 4. The Bible says, that comes from God alone. The Lord calls a man; why? To make him holy—to make him all that he was meant to be; but what he never can be, till he goes to Jesus Christ, and gets the Holy Spirit to help him. Can you think what made the holy God do so much for unholy creatures? Ah, brethren, our “God is love,” and out of Himself, there came such deep compassion, for the ruin and wretchedness of guilty man, that He made an agreement with His beloved Son; that for His sake, and because of what He was going to do, a family from among men should come to Him, and be saved. And we know that the saved family will be “a great multitude that no man can number.” There will be some, out of all the nations and tongues upon earth, and they shall stand before the Saviour on His throne, and they shall be clothed in white; and while they wave the conqueror’s palm, they will cast their golden crowns at His feet, and give

Him endless praise and blessing, for having made them holy, and brought them home to God !

Dear friends, there will be room among those blessed ones, for all of you, if you will seek the Saviour now. He is sitting on the throne of grace, waiting to hear you cry to Him, to save you. Let Him not see that you don't care, about being made holy ; that you don't care, to pray to Him. Do you know why the Lord tells you that you must be holy ? Just in order that you may be happy. Listen to what He said when Moses went up the awful mountain, and told Him that the children of Israel entreated that the Lord would not speak to them any more, for they were afraid ; but speak to Moses for them. " They have well said all that they have spoken ; oh, that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever ! "

Remember, then, that it is the happiness, of His people that the Lord is anxious about, when He beseeches them to come to Him and learn to be holy. You know yourselves, that there can be no real, no lasting happiness without goodness, and " without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

But what is holiness ? some of you may ask. Just loving God, and one another. Our God first, and best, with all our hearts ; and each other like ourselves, for His sake. That is perfect holiness ;

but it belongs to no man but the Man Christ Jesus. Now, I pray you, give good heed to this, though you have often heard it before.

When we believe in Jesus as our own Saviour, His perfect goodness, that is, the holy obedience to God's law which He rendered when He was a Man, living among men; is counted to us, and reckoned ours, as completely as if we had wrought it ourselves. That spotless obedience is called in the Bible, "the righteousness of God," or of Christ; it is the pure white robe given to God's children in heaven, to shew that they are justified, or without fault in His sight.

But while we get Christ's righteousness or perfect goodness, as our title to heaven, we need His Spirit, to make us holy on earth; teaching us to love God, and our neighbour down here; or in other words, to keep the commandments.

When the Lord Jesus wanted to teach His disciples how that was, He called Himself the Vine, and His people the branches; now just as the branches are nourished by the sap that runs from the tree into them, (for they have no separate life of their own), they who are joined to the Saviour by faith, are made holy by the Spirit of Christ flowing from Him, into them; faith is the channel through which He comes. Jesus is the Head, and His people are the members; but apart from Him, they can do nothing, they have neither life nor holiness of their own, but they draw all goodness,

and all virtue from Him. Perhaps the beautiful story in St Mark's Gospel (chap. v.), will help to make this clear to you.

You remember that one day, when the Lord Jesus Christ was going home with the ruler of the synagogue, to heal his dying daughter, He was followed by a great crowd of people, who thronged and pressed round, in their great anxiety to see the Man, who had just cast out a legion of devils from a poor madman, and brought him to the feet of his Deliverer, "clothed, and in his right mind." Through that crowd a poor woman pressed anxiously, to get near the Lord Jesus. She had been ill for twelve years, of a disease that could not be healed, for she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

So soon as this poor sufferer heard of Jesus, and the wonderful works He had done, she believed He could cure her, and neither sickness nor poverty, could hinder her from trying to see Him. She got through the crowd as near as she could, "and touched His garments: for she said, If I may but touch His clothes, I shall be whole." She was right; that touch was enough, she felt that she was healed. And did Jesus know what had happened? Yes. He directly knew in Himself, that healing virtue had gone out of Him. What had drawn it out? The touch of faith. Where had it gone? Into the poor woman, and

the effect of that virtue from the Saviour's Person was peace to her soul, and health to her body. Does that not shew us, how we may draw virtue from Him, to heal our diseased souls, and to make us holy? The Saviour no longer walks among men on earth, we cannot touch even His garment, like that poor suffering woman; but we can touch His tender, loving heart by the cry of faith: Lord, Thou canst make us clean; oh, hear and help! And when we press close to Him, in believing prayer, the Spirit of all virtue and holiness, will come into our hearts from Him, and we shall daily grow in the love of God, and in the practice of good works, to bring glory to Him.

We notice that there were many, crowding round the Saviour that day, but there was only one who drew virtue from Him; because there was only one, who felt her need and misery, and believed He could help her: "And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

Do you see, brethren? It is the Saviour alone who can make you holy; you can't do it for yourselves. No prayers, no reading, no church-going, no alms-giving can do it for you, any more than the many doctors could cure that suffering woman. You mustn't trust to those things, even if you had them all, for they've no power *in themselves*, to do you any good; they are just to you, what Christ makes them. You must go to Him in simple

faith first, believing that your sins are pardoned, and ask Him to send down His Holy Spirit into your hearts, to make you like Himself; and then He will bless all those means of grace to you, and make them helpful to your daily growth in the Christian character; and He will accept all your everyday duties as done for Him, and all your works of kindness to your neighbours, as marks of love shewn to Himself; and by and by, He will shew you how He values all such, from His people.

In chap. xxiii. we have the rest of the teaching, which the Lord gave from mount Sinai: part of it, belonging to the moral law, and therefore binding on Christian people, as the will of God for all men; and part of it, only given to the Jews, and not intended to be followed by other nations. The first words are for us all: "Thou shalt not raise (nor receive) a false report," carrying on, as it were, the ninth commandment against false witness. And, surely, that command is very needful for us all. It is very broad; it not only forbids the raising and spreading a false report of any one, ourselves, but we are not to receive it; we are not to listen to it, and encourage others to spread it about. Let us lay this to heart, my friends, for it is especially necessary, for all who live in small towns and villages; in little communities where people are so apt to busy themselves in looking after their neighbours' affairs, and in passing their opinions on his conduct. Let us take notice that it is a



sin against God, either to set abroad untrue stories ourselves, or to encourage others to do it, by eagerly listening to what they say about, or *against*, their neighbours; for false reports are seldom to the advantage of those they concern. Remember that if bad stories are false; to spread them about, is lying; and if they are true; it is evil speaking; and you know that Christian people ought to have nothing to do with either; for God hates lying lips; and you're to love your neighbour, as you love yourselves.

The Lord goes on to say, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." We are not to do what we know to be wrong, because many other people do the same. It will be no excuse for us, to say that we only did as others did, and we are no worse than our neighbours. When did God ever set your neighbours' doings before you, for a pattern? Nay; you have not to follow any bad example, no matter who, or how many, may set it. Christians have the One perfect Pattern, given them to follow: they are to hold straight on, in the way of God's commandments, "looking unto Jesus."

And notice this, my friends. Christians must be very careful how they walk in this evil world, where worldly people are watching for their going wrong. They must try to live so, that their neighbours would get good, and not harm, by following their example. You remember the Lord Jesus

told His disciples they were to "let their light so shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, might glorify their Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. They were to let their neighbours see by their behaviour, what the grace of God had done for them, that they might learn to wish for, and seek God's help, for themselves.

You know we are all apt enough, to follow bad examples; we don't need any one's help, to run in the downward road; but we do want all the help we can get, to draw us into the right path, and to keep us there: and the Lord's people should always be ready, and anxious to give a helping hand to others.

We notice, too, in this chapter, how the Lord would have His people be kind, and tender-hearted, not only to their own poor, but to the strangers in their land. They were to have a fellow-feeling for the friendless and the stranger, for they knew what it was themselves. "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." And then comes a law which was only meant for the children of Israel themselves, after they got into the promised land. "Six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat. In

like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard."

Now, brethren, give good heed to this. St Paul tells us that "The law (that is, the law of Moses about sacrifices, and feast-days, and ceremonies), had a shadow of good things to come," Heb. x. 1. It could not bring these good things itself, for it was only a foreshadowing of them; but it could teach men what was to be in aftertimes, when the day of the Lord should come.

This seventh year—when the land was to lie fallow; when the people were to do no work, but enjoy a long holiday in the fear of God; when their animals were to have unbroken rest; when the poor, and the beasts of the field, might eat their fill, no man hindering them—was it not a lovely picture, to keep the children of Israel, and the Christian church through them, continually in mind that "there is a good time coming"? The Lord's day of peace and rest to the world, after its long, weary, working days of sin and trouble, that glorious time is spoken of through the whole Bible. It is the day when the Lord shall come with ten thousand of His saints, that Enoch foretold, in the old days before the flood. It is the "day of Christ, that Abraham rejoiced to see," John viii. 56; the day that was so often spoken of by the prophets, and declared plainly by the Lord Jesus Himself, and earnestly looked forward to, by the apostles; and longed for, and promised

in the closing words of Scripture : “ Surely I come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” And what will His coming be ? To those that have never come to Him here, it will be fearful. Oh, how shall they abide it ! How shall they endure “ the wrath of the Lamb ” ? But to those who have loved and longed for Him, His coming will be like the sun rising on a dark place ; bringing light, and life, and joy. And, best of all ; He comes, not to go away again ; but to dwell with His people, and to sit on the throne of His father David, and to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 32, 33. The King of the Jews ! And His reign shall be a time of peace and joy ; a time of rest and plenty ; a time of kindness and brotherly love, binding all hearts to each other and to Him ; a time when men shall no more labour in the sweat of their brow, for “ the earth shall yield her increase,” Ps. lxxvii. 6, basking in the blessing smile of her King ; and “ there shall be no more curse,” Rev. xxii. 3, 4, 5. And “ the Lord’s servants shall serve Him,” and there shall be joy and gladness, for their God shall be among them, “ and they shall see His face,” “ and they shall reign for ever and ever ” !

The keeping of the seventh year, as a Sabbath, or year of rest to the land, was to be a constant trial of the people’s faith and obedience ; whether they would trust in their God to supply their wants, when they were neither to sow, nor reap,

nor gather into barns; or be greedy, and grudge their fields the rest, that the Lord appointed.

He, who could send the rain and the sunshine, and command the corn to grow as it pleased Him, promised, that if His people would only obey Him and keep His laws, they should never want, but have bread to the full. He says (Lev. xxv. 21, 22), "I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of the old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in, ye shall eat of the old store." They were forbidden to store up anything that grew of itself, but might pluck the ears of corn, and gather the grapes that grew on the undressed vines, as they were wanted; and the poor and the stranger might do the same. The Lord never forgot them.

The seventh year or Sabbath for the land, was a law for the children of Israel only; but the seventh day of holy rest, was for all Christian people as well; and the Lord reminds men of it now: "Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed": not only refreshed by bodily rest, from toil, but refreshed in mind and spirit, by the holy services of the Sabbath day.

God knew, that six days' toiling to provide what was needful for the body, would be very apt to

weigh men down, and make them forget that they had any wants beyond food and clothing; and in mercy He ordered the blessed rest of the Lord's day, to refresh the weary body, and to raise the soul, to thoughts and longings after a brighter world than this. Oh how hard and hopeless men would grow, in the mere wear and tear of life, or in striving after gain; if the blessed Sunday never came round, to give them time to stop and think, and look up!

For you observe, brethren, that the same voice which said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," said at the same time, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." To labour, or work, is appointed for all men in different ways; and those who fancy they have no work to do, are none the happier for it, but weary and discontented.

Daily labour is not only useful, but honourable; and it may be made noble and dignified, by being done for God. How can that be? you ask. How can our common, everyday work, be anything to God? Our heavenly Father condescends to let us know, that when His children think of Him, and do their work rightly and well, it brings glory to Him; and from what St Paul says, it is clear that there is nothing so small, or what we call, so trifling, that our God will not take pleasure in, when it is done from love to Him. He says, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, (and what can be smaller

and commoner than that?) or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. Perhaps you will understand best, how this may be done, by getting it clearly into your minds, that this world is the Lord's vast harvest-field; and that all Christian people are His day-labourers, whom He has set to work in it.

And the Master gives his and her particular work to every one; and not only to the strong and able-bodied labourer, but to the old and infirm, to boys and girls, and even to little children. He gives work to all His people, suitable to their age and strength.

Some of the Lord's workmen have to toil with their brains; thinking, calculating, writing; some have to manage the affairs of their country's vast dominions; some to fight her battles, by land and sea; some have to preach the blessed tidings of God's love, to sinners at home, and abroad; some have to teach the young and ignorant; some have to look after their farms, others after their merchandise; some have to tend the sick; and some to watch the dying. Some of the Master's servants have to work at the bottom of a coal-pit, and some to herd sheep on the mountain; some have to work in the fields, others to break stones on the roads, while some must keep shop; many have to earn their bread by working for others, in various ways, and others have to take care of their children, and make homes and husbands comfort-

able and happy: all, in their several positions, doing their best, for the sake of Him, who loved and worked for them all.

Now, dear friends, I want you every one to feel, that your condition of life, and your daily work, whatever it may be, was expressly appointed for you, by your Master in heaven; and that the way to do it to His glory, as St Paul tells us, is to seek God's blessing on it day by day; and then to put heart and hands to the work, and do it as well as you possibly can, for love of that dear Saviour, who has done, and suffered, and died for you; all the while remembering, that you are not trying to *win* heaven, but to please Him who *has* won it for His people. So live, my brethren; and so love; and so work; and before long, you shall hear with joyful hearts, "Well done, good and faithful servants: ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things: enter ye into the joy of your Lord," Matt. xxv. 21.

In this chapter, we have the three great feasts that the Lord appointed to be kept every year, when all the men among the children of Israel were to appear before the Lord, in His house. You remember how often it is said in the Testament, that the Lord Jesus Christ went up to Jerusalem, for it was the time of one of the great feasts of the Jews.

When He lived on earth; as a Son of Abraham, He belonged to the nation of Israel: He was a



Member of the Jewish church, and was careful to obey the law of Moses in all things; and so He regularly attended the appointed feasts at Jerusalem, where the Lord's house was. Why are Christians not more anxious to do as He did? Let us each see to that, for ourselves.

The three great feasts among the Jews, were the feast of unleavened bread, or the Passover; the feast of weeks, or of first fruits; and the feast of ingathering, or of tabernacles. They belonged only to the Jews; but the Christian church has something that answers to them all.

The feast of unleavened bread came first. It answered to our Good Friday, and Easter, the time when "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us," and rose again from the dead.

The feast of weeks, at the beginning of harvest, when the first fruits of what had been sown in the fields, were plucked, as an earnest of the full harvest to follow; is shewn by our Whitsunday, the day when the Holy Spirit came down on the apostles, and made many men and women believers in Jesus, through their preaching. The Holy Spirit is still among us, converting sinners to the Saviour, gathering many in, here and there; the first fruits of the glorious harvest that shall be, by and by, when the great Husbandman Himself shall come. The time we are living in now, is the time of the first fruits, while the Spirit is working, and turning men to God.

The last feast of the Jewish year by the law of Moses, was the feast of tabernacles, when the harvest is gathered in from the field, and safely housed.

The Jews always expected that their King or Messiah, would appear on earth at the time of the feast of tabernacles. It was that, which made Peter cry out, when he saw his Master shining in glory on the mount of transfiguration, "Let us make three tabernacles," believing in his confusion, that the King of the Jews was come to dwell with His people. Ah! their King was indeed among them, but they did not know Him in His lowly state; and He had much to do, and to suffer, before He could come in His glory, to sit on His Father's throne! He had to bear His cross, before He could wear His crown.

The true feast of tabernacles has not come yet. It will be when the Lord Jesus comes again, when He will send His reapers, to gather His wheat into the garner. The holy angels shall come and gather all His people together, wherever they may be scattered; those that are in their graves shall rise, and the living shall meet them, and the sea shall give up her dead—not one of those that believed in Jesus, shall be missing. All His own shall be gathered in, and "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," Matt. xiii. 43. Ah! if you would be among them then, cling fast to the Saviour now!

## EXODUS XXIII. XXIV. XXV.

**I**N the end of chap. xxiii. the Lord promises that He will guide His people into the land He had given them. The Angel of the Covenant, as the Lord Jesus Christ was often called in the Old Testament, should go before them, and their enemies, the idol-worshipping nations that were living in Canaan meantime, were to be destroyed. They would have been a snare to the children of Israel, and have taught them to forsake their God, and fall down before graven images, which are abominable in His sight. So the Lord said that He would drive them out before the Israelites, by degrees, and their images were to be utterly broken down. But His people shall be blessed abundantly, if they will only serve their God: "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee;" and everything of theirs should prosper and flourish, while the Lord said that the Canaanites, the wicked inhabitants of the country, should be made afraid of the chil-

dren of Israel, so that they should turn their backs and flee before them ; but not all at once.

The Lord said, “ I will not drive them out from before thee in one year ; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.”

The land was large enough for the children of Israel, but they were not enough for the land ; and perhaps, had they got the better of their enemies all at once, they might have been proud and puffed up, and ready to cry, “ Our hand, and the mightiness of our arm, hath gotten us this victory ;” and have forgotten their God, who fought for them.

And is it not so in the heart of the Christian ? Though he is converted and brought home to God by the teaching of the Spirit, though he have peace through the Saviour’s blood, his evil nature is not overcome all at once ; some bad habits, some besetting sins, cleave to him for many a day, keeping him humble ; and needing constant prayer, and diligent watching, to drive them out by degrees. But, as Joshua at last subdued the Canaanites for the children of Israel, so the Lord Jesus will subdue His people’s sins, the enemies of their peace, and in the end, make them “ more than conquerors,” Rom. viii. 37. Let us always look up to Him, “ the Captain of our salvation,” Heb. ii. 10.

The Lord again solemnly warns His people, to

have nothing to do with the heathen, nor their idols. "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."

Do you notice, brethren, that the heathen were to be driven out of the land of Canaan, for fear they should tempt the Lord's people to do wrong? That surely should teach Christians, how careful they must be as to the company they keep.

We are so made that we cannot be very intimate with a person, and spend much of our time with him, without learning something of his ways, and beginning to feel and act as he does. This is so true, that it is a common saying, "Tell me who a man goes with, and I'll tell you what he is"; for a man's intimate companions are sure to have a good deal of power over him, in forming his habits and character. Then, what care we should take, to choose our intimates aright; how careful we should be, that our companions be such as may do us good, and not mischief; for we are easily led wrong; ready to follow those who encourage us to do what we like, instead of what we ought.

God, who made us, knows that we cannot do without companionship, and He invites us to the highest of all—to fellowship with Himself! But what fellowship could poor, weak, sinful creatures like us, have with the High and Holy One who

dwells in the heaven of heavens? So He, in His marvellous compassion, came down to earth, and was born an Infant, in our nature, and lived, and worked as a man, and sought companionship among working men, His fellow-creatures; setting them a perfect example of a Man living by faith and prayer—loving His neighbours with a self-forgetting love that led Him to die for them—and in all things, doing the will of God from the heart.

Brethren, there is the Companion, our God has provided for His people, wonderful though it be to think of! There is the “Brother that is born for adversity,” and the “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother”!

And Jesus Himself invites us to the closest and most intimate fellowship. He says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” Rev. iii. 20. Oh, think of that; He is knocking at your heart’s door, and waiting for you to open it. And you cannot truly seek companionship with the Saviour, without finding it the best of blessings, amid the troubles of this life, and *through it*, growing more and more like Him, and more fit for His glorious presence.

My brethren, you are all invited; oh seek it for yourselves!

It is sad to read afterwards, how the children of



Israel disobeyed, and did not drive out the heathen nations, as the Lord commanded; and from that very disobedience, most of their troubles came: for they fell into the snare of evil example, and forsook the God of their fathers; falling down to stocks and stones, provoking the Lord to be angry with them, and punish them, in spite of His loving mercy and compassion. Hear what the prophet Isaiah says, many hundred years afterwards, about the Lord and His people: "He was their Saviour. In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him? that led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before him, to make Himself an everlasting name," Isa. lxiii.

And to think of their forgetting and forsaking their God, who had done all that for them, and more! Surely they were an ungrateful and rebellious race; but is not fallen man made up of self-love, and ingratitude to God?

We cannot read their after history without won-

dering at the people's wickedness, and at the mercy of their long-suffering God. Their whole story is a warning against disobedience—a warning to us, brethren.

We read that the Lord desired Moses to come up again to Him in the mount. Aaron and his two eldest sons, with seventy of the elders of Israel, were to go with him so far; but at a certain distance were to stop, and worship the Lord with deep reverence. "And Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him." Moses alone, as the mediator, was to go near: the priests (as they were afterwards) and the elders were to stay below.

Does that not teach us that it is through the Mediator alone, through Jesus Christ Himself, that sinners can get near to God? There must be no one between us and Him. Neither angels, nor saints, nor any created being, can stand between man and His Maker: none but Jesus Christ, the only Mediator. He says it Himself: "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me," John xiv. 6. He is the Redeemer, the Saviour, the only Advocate for fallen creatures, and we need no other; for what created being could have a heart so tender and loving as He, who willingly bore the punishment of sin in our place? and is now sitting on the throne of grace, listening to His people's prayers, feeling for them in trial and temptation,



helping them in every time of need, and always pleading for them with His Father in heaven.

Moses was the type, or figure, of Jesus, as the Mediator; he stood before God on his people's behalf: and when we read that none was allowed to go near the awful Presence, except Moses, it teaches plainly the great truth we have been speaking of, that God has appointed but one Mediator between Himself and fallen man; Christ Jesus, who was both God and man, and "there is therefore no other name under heaven, given among men, by whom we can be saved," except His only.

Moses then told the people all that the Lord had said to him when he was on the mount before, (for you remember, that the children of Israel were so terrified by the awful thunders and lightnings when the ten commandments were given, that they entreated Moses to go and hear what the Lord God should say, and tell it to them afterwards).

He repeated in their ears all the statutes and the judgments, and the laws, some of which we have been considering; and the people with one voice declared that they would obey them.

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." They felt that they were standing in the immediate presence of their awful and holy Lord and King,

and they were persuaded that they should always be obedient to His will. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel." Though Moses wasn't likely to forget the words which he had listened to, from the voice of God Himself, he is careful to write them all down directly, that there might be no mistake afterwards, as to what the Lord had said, and that there might always be the "written Word" to go to, in every case of doubt.

And ever since, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, has ruled and guided it by the "written Word,"—nothing has been left to tradition or hearsay,—nothing has been trusted to the memories of men, that had to do with the salvation of our souls. All was dictated by God the Holy Spirit, and written down for our learning, "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. iii. 16. We have the will of God made known to us in our Bible, my brethren, and ye do well if ye take heed to it, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. It will be a guiding light to you in this dark world, teaching you to know Jesus, who is "the bright and morning Star," Rev. xxii. 16.

And always remember that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men

spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 20. You see how careful Moses was, to write down immediately the words that God said to him; and it was the same with the prophets. And did the Lord and His servants take all that trouble, that we might have the Bible to lie dusty on our shelves, think you? Ah! mind that a neglected Bible, is an awful thing to have, for we shall be judged by its words at the last day.


The Lord's agreement, or covenant, is now to be repeated to His people: and the first thing Moses has to do, is to build an altar at the foot of mount Sinai, and set up twelve pillars, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The altar was on God's side, the pillars were on theirs.

Then sacrifices were offered on behalf of all the people, burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings; because sinful man cannot draw near to God, or make any agreement with Him, except through blood-shedding. The blood of the lambs and oxen could take away no sin, it was to shew forth the atoning sacrifice, the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God: it is only because He was sacrificed for us, that we have any liberty to come to God, and to pray to Him. Then Moses took the blood of the slain oxen, and divided it in two parts: one half he sprinkled on the altar, to shew Jesus offering up His life to save man, as St Paul says, "By His own blood He entered in once, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for

us," Heb. ix. 12. That means, that by dying for us, Jesus made a perfect atonement, complete amends to God for our sins; and it never need, nor ever can be, done over again. It was done once, and for ever. "He obtained eternal redemption for us."

Moses having sprinkled the altar with blood, on God's part, turns to the people: "And he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." They were forward to promise obedience to all that He commanded them. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning these words." Did that not signify, that being now a redeemed people, bought with innocent blood, they were to give themselves and all they had, willingly to God, to serve and please Him? And Christians are reminded by this, that they "have been bought with a price," even with Christ's precious blood, and that they are therefore not to live to themselves any longer, following their own ways, but to "glorify God with their bodies, and with their spirits, which are His."

When St Paul was writing to the Jews of his time, he shewed them how all the sacrifices, and things that were ordered by the law of Moses, were to teach about Jesus Christ, and His salvation, and



he speaks of this very time that we are now reading about.

. He says, "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took ~~the~~ blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament" (or covenant) "which God hath enjoined unto you," Heb. ix. 19, 20.

Now that blood, the blood of goats and calves, was the blood of the Old Testament times, which could not take away sin at all, and was only meant to shew forth the blood of Christ.

We read in St Matthew's Gospel, that just before the Lord Jesus was betrayed; the last evening He spent with His disciples, when they ate the Lord's Supper together; after breaking the bread, "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This is the blood that takes away sin: the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices were only to teach men to look to *this*. And now there are no more sacrifices to be offered, no more blood to be shed for sin; for Jesus has offered Himself, a spotless sacrifice to God for us, once for all, and for ever.

Then, my brethren, when you hear that the Lord Jesus Christ has done that, when you know that He has shed His blood for you, and borne

your "sins in His own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24; what have you to do? Surely not to keep fast hold of your sins, as if you did not want to part with them, but to confess them to the Saviour, now at once, and beg of Him to wash ~~them~~ away in that precious blood which cleanses from ~~all~~ <sup>every</sup> sin.

Go and ask Him without fear; for if He loved you so dearly as to die for you, He will be very ready to forgive you, and teach you to live for Him. And, oh, remember that there is no other blood, and no other Saviour in God's wide world, that can take away even the least of your sins.

The blood of Christ can wash away *all* sin, and nothing else can wash away *any*, so be sure and go to Him, every one of you; and cry, Lord, save me, for my trust is only in Thee!

We have seen that the Israelites were very ready to promise on their part, to do all that the Lord commanded. Did they perform as well? Did they obey, and keep the covenant that Moses made for them with their God? No, indeed they did not. They disobeyed in everything, and the Lord in His displeasure, cast them out of the good land He had promised their fathers; and to this day they are suffering the sore punishment of their disobedience. They are wanderers over all the earth, without a king, without a country, as Moses told them would happen, if they forsook their God. But all that will come to an end. They are God's people yet, in spite of all their

sins ; He has not cast them away ; He has not forgotten His promise to Abraham, that He would give the land of Canaan to him, and to his children for an everlasting possession ; and we believe assuredly, that ~~they~~ will be brought back some day, from all the countries where they have been driven, and they shall know Jesus of Nazareth, to be their King, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and in Him, “ shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”


After the sprinkling of the blood on the people, we read, “ Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ; and they saw the God of Israel : and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” That is, they saw the dazzling splendour, “ the excellent glory ” which was the token of God’s presence ; but Him they saw not, nor any manner of similitude or likeness : all that could be clearly seen, was that the awful brightness rested, as it were, on a shining pavement of precious stones, blue and clear like the heavens above.

“ And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand : ” He did not destroy them by the awful sight (was not ~~the~~ mediator between Him and them ?), and they ate and drank of the offerings before the Lord. “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there : and I will give thee tables of stone, and

a law, and commandments which I have written ; that thou mayest teach them.” These were the two tables with the ten commandments, written by the finger of God. “And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua ; and Moses went up **into** the mount of God. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you : and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you ; if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.”

Joshua went up so far, with Moses, and stayed with him, probably during the six days that the cloud covered mount Sinai, till the Lord called to Moses on the seventh day.

Moses then went up to the top, while Joshua waited there for his coming down again. “And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days : and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount : and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.” He was now alone with God. None of his friends could be with him. He was alone in the awful Presence, standing between God above, and the people below. Does not all this remind us of One greater than Moses, the





Saviour Himself? who, on the last night of His life, went into the garden of Gethsemane, and all His faithful disciples with Him; but soon He left the most of them behind, and took three on with Him. Then, feeling that He must be alone with God, He left even those three intimate friends, and went on a little farther, till there was none beside Him, but His Father; and there He poured out His heart to Him, in the agony of His suffering. He was then the Mediator between God and man; He was transacting with His Father the tremendous business of man's redemption. He had to do it alone—"Of the people there was none with Him," Isa. lxiii. 3. No created being could help Him to bear the awful burden, or to pay the overwhelming debt He had taken on Himself, for He was standing in the stead of sinful man. Brethren, when you are inclined to think lightly of wrong doing; that it is not so very bad, and that a few sighs of sorrow will make amends, and a few tears of repentance will wash it out, do you cast a glance at the garden of Gethsemane; give a thought to what that dreadful night witnessed there: it will shew you something, of what the holy God thinks about sin.

Forty days and forty nights, did Moses stay in the mount of God, without eating or drinking. He had to be specially prepared by God Himself, for the great work that was now to be done. Up to this time, there had never been any building

set apart for the worship and service of God—nothing but the simple altar of earth, or rough stone, that Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob had been used to set up, to offer sacrifice upon. But now that the children of Israel are to be made into a nation with the Lord Himself for their King, He will have a house or palace built where His presence may dwell in the midst of them, and where the people are to come, to offer worship to the Lord as their God, and to learn His laws and commandments, as their King.

This house was to be a sort of tent; with curtains that could be taken down, because the Israelites are as yet wanderers, travelling through the desert, on their way to the rest of their promised country. So the house of their God, their King's palace, has to be a moveable one; easily taken to pieces and put together again, whenever the people pitched their tents for a time. It shewed the Presence of God with them.

And, brethren, the Christian Church, the company of faithful people, is not left to journey through this world alone, though her Head and King is gone to a far country, to heaven for a while.

Before He went, He said to the little company of disciples that made up the church then, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

The Lord Jesus is with His church, in the power

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of the Holy Spirit, who has taken His place here during His absence, dwelling in the hearts of believers, and turning sinners to God. And the Saviour Himself, is present with His people too, in feeling and tender sympathy ; He “ knows their sorrows,” shares their trials, with more than a brother’s heart, comforts them by His love, and cheers them with the blessed hope of soon being with Him, there to find “ fulness of joy,” and rest and peace for ever.

The Lord’s house was to be called the tabernacle, or sanctuary, and was to be made strictly under the direction of God Himself, both the tabernacle itself, and the things that were to be in it. Several chapters are taken up with the details of the tabernacle, and of its holy furniture, which the Lord taught Moses how to make, during the forty days he was on mount Sinai. He made him clearly understand how everything was to be done, even to the smallest particular ; and Moses was not to change so much as the putting in of a pin, for everything had its own meaning. “ Look,” said the Lord, “ that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee on the mount.”

My brethren, there is something here that ought to strike us.

Now, listen. The same hand wrote the description of the creation of the world, and of the making of the tabernacle in the wilderness ; and the same Spirit of God dictated those descriptions.

Now, when you recollect that the account of the making of the world; the heavens and earth, and sea, with all that is in them, is all given in a single chapter, while the account of the making of the tabernacle, and the things in it, takes up a good many; don't you wonder why that is? what the reason can have been? It would surely seem that in the mind of God the Holy Spirit, the knowledge of the one fact, was much more important to us, than the knowledge of the other. And so it is in truth.

For, while in searching into the works and wonders of creation, we learn something of the mighty power, and glorious wisdom, of God, their Maker; in considering the meaning of the tabernacle, and its services, we learn something of the deep compassion, of the tender forgiving love, of God our Saviour. For it was a figure of Jesus Christ, and His finished work, His great salvation. Yes, my brethren, it is of far more consequence to us men, to learn how the lost world was redeemed, than to know how it was made at first. And how mournful it is to think, that many men spend their lives, in studying God's wonders in creation, and go to their graves, without ever having seriously inquired into the riches of redeeming love!

It has been well remarked by one who had studied, and thought, and learned more than most men, that though the heavens are said to declare the *glory* of God, they are nowhere said to declare

the *will* of God. That knowledge comes to us through Jesus Christ alone. It is only through Him, the living Word, as made known to us in the Bible, that we learn God's gracious will towards men.

At the time we are reading of, the Lord's purposes about redemption and salvation, had not been made known, at all clearly; but now the time has come, when His chosen people are to be taught much more plainly, by the preaching of the tabernacle. Yet, though we, who have the New Testament to guide us, can see much of the true meaning of the tabernacle in the wilderness, it was very dim to the children of Israel. They could only see things through a glass, very darkly, for the True Light had not then come.

But the tabernacle service taught some of them then, and it teaches the Christian church since; that sin could only be put away, by the bloodshedding of the Sacrifice that God Himself had provided, long, long before—the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. And, brethren, when we read that many good men in those old times, longed to know more about that salvation, and to understand better, what was meant by the services of the tabernacle, should we not bless God for having given us His Holy Word, to teach us all that they had no means of learning; and which, if we study it with faith and prayer, will make us “wise unto salvation”?

## EXODUS XXV.—XXXII.

“**A**ND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.” We are now listening to the words that were spoken to Moses, when he went up by himself to the top of mount Sinai, to get the Lord’s instructions for the building of the tabernacle, and the making of the sacred things that were to be in it.

Remembering that the children of Israel were encamped in the wilderness, we might be ready to ask, where the Lord’s offering was to come from, for the materials needed for the work, were to be of everything that was most costly and rich. Gold, and silver, and brass, and precious stones, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and sweet spices, and fragrant oils, and shittim wood.

Some may be inclined to ask, Where could the people, who had so lately been slaves, working without wages, get such things as these?

My friends, the God of Israel is no cruel task-

master, like the king of Egypt. If He require bricks, He gives the straw to make them with. Whatever He desires from His people, He will enable them to do. We have lately seen that the Israelites were well provided. "The Lord brought them forth with silver and gold," Ps. cv. 37. They had not only the gifts, that their late masters pressed upon them at the last, in their anxiety to get rid of them—they had all the rich and costly spoils of the Egyptian hosts, that were washed ashore, by the waves of the Red Sea, and became the lawful prey of the Lord's people. So they had plenty of everything that was necessary for the Lord's work; and their God now gives them the opportunity, of proving that they were thankful for His great goodness. The silver and the gold were His: He had given them, and He had a right to ask them again; but we see that the Lord does not claim His people's property as His right; He asks a gift of love. He will not accept anything but an offering from the heart. It is so still, my brethren; our God values the smallest proof of His children's love. The Saviour prized the mite that came from the poor widow's heart, and was all she had to offer; more than all the costly gifts, that came from the hands of the rich. And don't forget that the Lord is always giving to His people, the opportunity He gave to the children of Israel, of making a willing offering for His service. There is always plenty to be done, for the souls

and bodies of our fellow-creatures. The poor and the needy are always at hand, to exercise the compassion, and the kindness, and the self-denial of Christian people; and the Saviour graciously accepts every effort to help His poor brethren, as a kindness done to Himself. Which of us would not spring forward, to do anything for *Him*? Then let us strive more earnestly, to help Him in the only way we can.

The Lord's house was now to be built. He said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Now, I want you to understand clearly, why the Lord took such pains, as we may say, to give Moses an exact picture of everything. You know that when a man has a fine house, or church to build, he first gets an idea of it, shaped out in his mind; then he draws a picture of it, as he means it to be, and then he makes very careful plans and measurements of every part, for the direction of the workmen. Now, a great plan had always been in God's mind in heaven; and the tabernacle, with all that was in it, was to be the picture, or representation of it, on earth.

Christ and His great salvation, was the original in the mind of God: the tabernacle, with its furniture, was the picture to be shewn to men;



and the directions given so particularly to Moses, about every part, were the working plan, as we should call it. It will not be easy, perhaps, to make this subject very plain, but we must do our best, to understand what has been written for us, with so much care.

Holy Spirit of God! when we read about the tabernacle in the wilderness, we would see Jesus. We pray Thee, shew us how it represents Him and His finished work!

This chapter, and the next five, are taken up with the Lord's instructions to Moses. He now knew exactly, what was to be made, and in chapter xxxi. the Lord tells him who was to do the work, and how. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee."

Those two men were insensed, to understand all the directions that Moses should give them, and

also to make everything according to the heavenly pattern ; the tabernacle itself, and all the sacred things that were to be in it, the sweet incense for burning before the Lord, the holy and beautiful garments for Aaron and his sons, and the holy oil for anointing the persons, and things, that belonged especially to the Lord's service, that they might be set apart from common use.

The Lord gave those two men the power to practise perfectly, many curious and difficult arts, that they had never been brought up to. They were enabled to work, by the wisdom and skill that God gave them. And is it not still the Lord who gives wisdom and power ? Does not all skill come from Him ? The brain that invents, and the mind that arranges, and the hand that executes, are they not all God's gifts ? Yes, brethren, and they should be used in His service.

The Lord has a great work to do, and He fits men and women for doing different parts of it, and carrying on His wise purposes, in His church, and in the world. He gives different talents, various powers to His people, He makes some, ministers, preachers of His word, while the many, are to be hearers ; He makes some, husbandmen, and others, skilled artizans, and He finds suitable work for all to do, if we only seek honestly to be guided by Him : like St Paul, who, as soon as he knew his Saviour, cried, " Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? "

All have not the same abilities and gifts, and all are not called to the same work, for the great Master, and no one can do everything; the hand cannot do the work of the head, nor the head of the feet. Moses was the mediator, and the law-giver, and the leader of the Israelites; but he was not the maker of the tabernacle. He had all the wisdom and learning of Egypt: but he knew nothing about its needlework and fine linen. He could divide the Red Sea at God's command, but he couldn't work in metals, or carve wood, or cut stones; he could neither sew nor spin. So all those different arts had to be practised by persons, who were appointed and specially prepared for the purpose. The Lord had plenty of other work for Moses; and as those things had to be done, He soon made Himself workmen and workwomen to do them. You would all have felt yourselves honoured, by being employed, as they were, in God's service? You would have liked to saw timber, and cut stones, and work in gold and silver, and weave fine linen, and sew and spin for Him, wouldn't you? Well, my brethren, so you may. Nay, so you ought. Whatever you put your hands to, should be done for the Lord's sake. When you rise to your daily work in the morning, you should listen to Him saying to you, Do this for Me; and then, wouldn't it be faithfully and honestly done? God's blessing would be on you, and He would accept your commonest day labour, as work done

for Him, and God would be glorified in you ! Isn't that wonderful to think of ?

We read, that before the Lord finished speaking to Moses, He gave him over again, a very solemn charge for the children of Israel, about their holy and reverent observance of the Sabbath day, on pain of death, if they broke it ; saying, "Six days may work be done ; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord : whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." Notice, brethren, how careful the Lord was, of His holy day of rest ; the people were not to use it even in working for the tabernacle. "And the Lord gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God," and containing the ten commandments.

Moses had now been nearly forty days and nights, hidden from the sight of the children of Israel, by the awful cloud covering the top of mount Sinai, and they were fast losing patience at his staying away so long. All remained quiet on the awful mountain that had so lately burned with fire, and

the people have forgotten already, the thunders and lightnings, the blackness and darkness, the smoke and tempest, and the shrill blast of the trumpet, that pierced them through with fear. They are forgetting the Lord who brought them through the path of the sea; they are forgetting their meek and patient leader, who had so often besought the Lord to pardon their rebellion and their sins; in their vexation at having to wait: they wanted to hurry on to the promised land.

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

We can hardly imagine how they could dare to be so wicked, in the very place where they had so lately been terrified at the awful presence of the Lord. Their self-willed impatience has carried them beyond all fear of God, and all respect for their leader, (this Moses, indeed!), and they must have threatened Aaron; and frightened him nearly out of his senses, or he could never have submitted to such insolence, and given in to their outrageous and wicked demand; but he should have been ready to die, by their violent hands, rather than have acted as he did.

Listen to the disgraceful story: “And Aaron

said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the molten ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand; and fashioned it with a graving-tool, after he had made it a golden calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Perhaps Aaron thought that by asking for their ear-rings, he might hinder the people from going any farther; but if he expected they wouldn't be willing to give them up, he was disappointed; for they gathered them together directly, and brought them to him. Aaron then melted the gold, and poured it into a mould made in the shape of a calf, and engraved it; and when the besotted people saw it, they worshipped it, as if the senseless idol, had been the living God! They maybe remembered seeing the Egyptians adoring calves and bulls. It is said in Ps. cvi., "They made a calf in Horeb (the very place where the ten commandments had been given), and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed

their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.”

The children of Israel always shewed themselves so depraved and foolish, in their self-will, that we are the less surprised at their behaviour, monstrous as it was; but Aaron, does astonish us. That he could venture to take a graving tool in his hand, to make a golden calf, when he remembered the solemn judgments on the idols of Egypt, and with the awful words still ringing in his ears, from the voice of the Most High God,—“Thou shalt not make any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, nor in earth beneath,”—is hardly to be understood. Surely the very calf itself, was hardly more stupid and senseless, than its maker and its worshippers! and they were besides, daring, in their wickedness.

No doubt Aaron had satisfied his conscience, by saying that he was not going to make a false god for the people to worship, but only a representation of the True; for after building an altar before it, he gave out a feast to the Lord, for the next day.

The people rose early, and brought their offerings, and sacrificed them, not to the living God, who had brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and who gave them their daily bread; but to an image of gold, a calf, that they had seen made out of their own ear-rings! And then followed the riotous feasting and drunkenness, and the rude

games, and vile dances, that commonly took place at heathen festivals. Fit enough worship for a golden calf, perhaps, but not very fit for men and women who knew better ! The very people, who but a few weeks before, had had the ten commandments delivered to them, and had made a willing and solemn agreement with their God and King, that they would do all that He should tell them, and be obedient to His holy law ; these same people are now guilty of the grossest, vilest idolatry, dishonouring and abominable to the Lord, and corrupting and brutalising to themselves.

My brethren, remember, that to set the affections on anything lower than the pure, and holy, and loving God ; is to degrade and debase the character of man. Instead of rising upwards towards God, by a humble and holy worship, according to His will ; these Israelites have sunk themselves far below the level of the beast they were bowing down to : as Stephen says, “ They turned back again into Egypt in their hearts. . . . And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands,” Acts vii. 39-41.

We notice that Stephen calls it an idol, whatever Aaron might say of his handiwork ; and their bowing before it, was the most unmistakeable idolatry. Mark the wisdom, of forbidding any image whatever, to be made as a reminder of God, or as a means of bringing men into His Presence.



The image led the children of Israel into an act of idolatry; they worshipped a thing that their hands had made.

And the setting up of images has led to the same thing ever since. God is unknown or forgotten by the creatures He has made, while their adoration and homage are bestowed on senseless blocks of wood or stone, silver or gold. When the Saviour said, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth," John iv. 24, He surely did not mean that men were to set up an image, between Him and themselves, to help them to come properly before Him! Ah, who can poor, trembling sinners go to, half so well as to the gentle, compassionate Saviour? Neither angels nor saints have hearts so tender as He has.

And, brethren; remember who said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve." Not the world, nor anything that is in it,—not wealth, though many make a golden calf of their money, and bow down to it in their hearts,—not our secret inclinations, or favourite pursuits, whatever they may be,—none of these things, are to have our heart's best affection; *that* is to be kept for God alone; it is the only thing we can offer Him.

Oh, our God! incline us to be Thine only,—teach every one of us to cry to Thee from the bottom of our hearts,

“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate’er that idol be ;  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee !”

The mad rioting of the Israelites could not last very long. The Lord’s eye was upon them, though they had forgotten Him : “And He said unto Moses, Go, get thee down ; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves : they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them : they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy Gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” The Lord tells Moses the horrible sin they have committed, and he calls them *thy* people ; not mine any longer, for they have forsaken Me, the living and true God, and have made themselves an idol to worship it. Then, seeing the prayer that was rising in the heart of Moses for the guilty transgressors ; the Lord, as it were, forbids him to utter it : “And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people : now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them ; and I will make of thee a great nation.” But Moses cannot keep silence ; his heart is full, and he pours forth an earnest and touching prayer, in which he beseeches the Lord

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to turn from His anger, and not destroy His people, for His own glory's sake, lest the Egyptians should triumph over the ruin of the Hebrews; and for the sake of the oath, that He swore to their fathers: "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil that He thought to do unto His people."

The word "repented" is written to make it plain to us, for the Lord "is not a man, that He should repent." 1 Sam. xv. 29.

He did not do to Israel as He would have done, had Moses not interceded for them; but then He knew beforehand, that Moses would pray, and His dealing with the people was determined accordingly. This language is maybe used, in order to shew us the great use and value, of prayer for others. You

remember, that though the Lord had said He would destroy Sodom, He would have spared it on account of Abraham's prayer, if there had only been ten people in the place, that were not wicked : but the Lord knew, that the ten righteous could not be found.

Here Moses again appears as the type, or figure, of Jesus, interceding for His people. Moses prayed for the children of Israel as long as He was with them : but he was taken from them by death, so that he was only a faint picture of our Mediator, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." "And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand : the tables were written on both their sides ; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Moses came to the place where Joshua had waited for him, and they went down together. When the sound of wild revelry was borne indistinctly up the mountain side ; to the young soldier's ear, it came like the clashing of arms, and the din of fighting men ; "And he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp : " but Moses, who knew the shameful cause of the uproar, "said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome ; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon

as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and break them beneath the mount."

Now see the power, that one upright, firm-minded man, strong in the consciousness of right, and of God's presence with him, has over a whole disorderly multitude! Moses is not afraid to venture among the giddy, riotous crowd, and his presence strikes awe and terror around. They stop their dancing, conscience stricken with shame and fear, and dared not lift a hand against Moses, when "he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children drink of it." Was it not the same, when Elijah, the fearless prophet, stood alone on the Lord's side, among hundreds of idol-worshippers; when he avenged, in torrents of blood, the insulted majesty of the living God? Was it not the same, when the Lord of the temple came, as the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, to His Father's house; and found it profaned by crowds of money-seeking traders? He, a young, humbly dressed, solitary Man, with no weapon in His hand, but a whip of small cords, and no armour, but a glowing zeal for God's honour; was able, in the awe surrounding the intense purity of His righteous indignation, to cleanse the courts of the Lord from pollution, driving out the ungodly crowd who had dared to

fill them with the world's merchandise ! Stand with God, my brethren ; and you may stand alone among men !

After shewing the people, who, cowed and ashamed, durst not stand up before him—after shewing them their exceeding folly, in worshipping a thing like that—after making them drink up their god, Moses turned to Aaron : “ And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin on them ? ” Moses charges Aaron with the people's sin, because he should have hindered it. Mind that, brethren. We are justly answerable ourselves, for the wrong-doing of those that we *could* have stopped from doing it, and didn't try.

How different those two brothers were, that day ! Moses, standing upright, in his noble anger against sin—fearing his God, but fearing nought besides ; and Aaron, crouching and bending, under a sense of shame, and guilty compliance, and trying to make excuses to Moses, for what he had done : “ And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot : thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us : for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me : then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.”

O Aaron! Aaron's apology was a very lame one. Very likely the people *did* vex and frighten *him*; but there seems to have been no excuse for his conduct: it is not said that he ever tried to stop them, and he had always the Lord to cry to, if he couldn't guide the unreasoning mob himself.

Nothing is said in this place, of any notice the Lord took of Aaron's behaviour; but long afterwards, after Aaron was dead, Moses, in telling over their history to the children of Israel, just before his own death; when he came to this dreadful day, after saying how he had prayed the Lord not to make an end of them in His fierce anger, went on, "And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time." You see it was the mediator, that stood between the sinners and their offended God; and they were forgiven, because he prayed for them.

When Moses saw that the people were guilty, of having forsaken their God, for an idol, that they knew was made by the hands of a man, "he stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me, And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." The people had been guilty, not only of idolatry against God, but of rebellion against their King, and they now met with the punishment of traitors. Moses said to the sons of Levi, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his

sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men"; a small number, when we remember the multitude that sinned; but the Lord is a God of mercy, even when He executes judgment.

Perhaps those three thousand, were the ring-leaders; impenitent sinners who would not return into the camp, and were slain outside. What a dreadful ending to the day, they began so madly! It dawned on sin, and closed in woe.





## EXODUS XXXII. XXXIII.

**T**HERE would be little sleep in the camp of Israel, the night after the dreadful day of sin and sorrow, that you heard about, last Sunday.

The people were smarting under the beginning of their punishment, but they could little tell where it would finish. The covenant between them and the Lord Jehovah, was at an end. They had wilfully broken it, by their daring disobedience, at the very time when Moses was bringing down its conditions, written by the finger of God Himself, on the tables of stone. And if they had not been so taken up with their idolatrous dancing, and singing before the calf, they might have seen, what should have filled them with terror and dismay; that Moses had thrown down the tables out of his hands, and broken them—a sign that the Lord had cast off, the rebellious idol-worshipping people, who had so soon, and so wantonly, broken His holy law. But they must have been thankful the next day, to have their leader among them again, for they now knew, what it was to be

without him; and his kind words would make them grieve doubly, over their ungrateful and insolent behaviour towards him. “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.” Moses went up again into the presence of the Lord, and fell down before Him in the deepest grief. He cannot feel sure, that any forgiveness can be granted; but at least, he will make the trial, though his feelings almost hinder him from speaking. He confessed the people’s sin, and was beginning to entreat for pardon, when the anguish of spirit choked his voice, and the words would not come. “And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin” . . . . and then, with a desperate effort, he adds, “and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” He prays, that if the people’s sin be too great, to be forgiven, the Lord would take away his life, that he might not see their ruin. Moses afterwards tells the children of Israel, what happened to him in the mount. He says, “And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins, which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him

to anger. (For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you.) But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also," Deut. ix. 18, 19. The people would learn from that, that it was no light matter to make atonement for sin: it required from Moses, as their mediator, forty days and nights of fasting, and spending himself, in pleading and prayer. In that, he was but a faint shadow of Him who had to endure a life of suffering, and a death of unmeasured agony of spirit, to make amends for the world's sin. "He saved others: Himself He could not save." God's most beloved Son had to die: and that was, because man had ruined himself, and God would shew mercy, and yet be holy, and just, and true. "Bless the Lord, O our souls"!

The Lord would not blot Moses, out of the book of the living, but said that those who had sinned against Him, should be blotted out. They were not destroyed then, but we know that all those who had worshipped the calf, did die in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land.

The Lord did not give then the assurance of full pardon: He promised, indeed, that the people should be led to Canaan, but only an angel should be sent to guide them; and from time to time, they should be made to feel, that the Lord had not forgotten their abominable sin. "And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf

which Aaron made." The sin was theirs, in the first place. It was a wilful sin, in the people; it was a sin of infirmity, in Aaron. He gave in to them, which he ought not to have done, and so made their sin his own: but the Lord, who sees the hearts of men, knew exactly where the guilt chiefly lay; and He made the people, smart on account of the calf, and not Aaron, though he made it.

It is wonderful, what an inclination the children of Israel had, for worshipping images. They were punished again and again for it, before they reached Canaan, and often, very often, in their after history.

Perhaps this teaches us, brethren; that though the law of Moses could punish sin, it had no power to make the sinners any better; the Jews were always sinning against the law of Moses, and always being punished.

The law could shew men they were sinners, and it could punish them for being so; but it had no power to change their hearts, and mend their lives. Where must they go for mending? To the blood of Jesus; to the Fountain, where every sinner may wash, and be clean and white: and where he learns to hate his sins, and to leave them off, because they cost his Saviour, so dear. That blood both saves a man from hell, and makes him fit for heaven. Never rest, my brethren, till you feel that it has washed *you* clean, and is making you holy.

We read next, that though the children of Israel forgot their God, He has by no means forgotten His promise to their fathers, that He would bring their seed into the good land of Canaan. That promise did not depend on their good conduct at all; it was an absolute promise. Though they had so greatly sinned against Him, His word is truth. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.” They mourned, to think that the Lord was so displeased with them, and that, at any time, He might destroy them in His just anger. They were grieved, when they heard that the Pillar of cloud and fire, would be with them no more; and in sorrowful obedience, they strip off their ornaments, and appear as repentant sinners; for the Lord had bid Moses say to them, “I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and condemn thee; therefore now put off thy orna-

ments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb." How has their dancing been changed to mourning, their laughter to weeping! all signs of gladness stripped off, and the fragments of the broken tables of the law, lying scattered at the foot of the mount! Where were the people now, who had so lately entered into covenant with the Lord God? Lying helpless, in shame and sorrow, before Him, whom they have so highly offended. They had deserved to be cut off in a moment; but the Lord bids them humble themselves before Him, that He might consider their case, which would end in His shewing mercy; but He would first, bring them to a deep sense of their sin.

Was it not so, that He dealt afterwards, with the great city Nineveh; whose wickedness was so great, that the Lord said it should be overthrown, in forty days' time? But when the king and his people heard the dreadful threat; they mourned, and wept, and humbled themselves, and the Lord did not do to them the evil that He said, because they repented. Now, brethren, that is not law, but gospel. The law said, Obey, and live; Disobey, and die: but the gospel says, "Repent, and your sins shall be blotted out," in the blood of the Saviour, who died instead of you.

"And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and

called it The Tabernacle of the Congregation.” This was the tent, in which Moses was used to inquire of the Lord, and to hear causes, and give judgment to the people. The removing of that tent out of the camp; was still further to humble the children of Israel, by shewing that God had not yet forgiven them fully. They had forsaken Him; so He cannot dwell in the midst of them, as before. “And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord, went out into the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.”

Though the tent of audience, as we should call it, where every one might go, to seek counsel from the Lord, was taken away out of the camp, which had been so lately profaned by the presence of the golden calf: though it was taken to a distance outside, the people were not forbidden to follow it, and seek the Lord. He has not forsaken them, but is proving and humbling them, to bring them to repentance. And now the Lord puts high honour on His servant Moses in the sight of all the people, shewing that he alone, is to stand before God on their behalf; and they all rose up, and stood with reverence, as he passed through the camp, on his way to the place of meeting with the Lord: they knew he was their mediator, they willingly left their cause in his hands, and hoped for mercy through his prayers. “And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle,

and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door; and all the people rose up, and worshipped, every man in his tent door." What a grand sight, when the majestic Pillar came down from the top of mount Sinai, and stood at the door of the tent! It was the token of God's presence, and the people reverently bowed down when they saw it, and worshipped the Lord. By that, they acknowledged that the Lord only, was their God; and that they had nothing to do with idols.

My brethren, before we go further, we must think of this. Why does Moses tell us of all the sins; the backslidings, and the murmurings, and the ingratitude, and the idolatries of his people Israel; when he loved them so much, that he could have given up his own life, rather than see them destroyed? Shouldn't you have expected, that he would have said nothing about them, rather than have published their evil deeds to all the world, to the end of time? Yes; and perhaps if Moses had been writing to please himself, or to please the Jews, so he would. But it was very different. Moses was only the *pen*, as we may say, in the hand of the Spirit of Truth, who had all these things written, for the warning and the teaching of Christians afterwards.

The story of the Jewish people, travelling through the wilderness, on their way to the promised land of Canaan, is very like what goes on





in the heart, and life, of every converted person, travelling through this world on his way to "the better land" in heaven. We have often noticed this, in going through the book of Exodus; and we will take just one example now.

It seems so very strange, doesn't it? that, after all they were continually seeing of the power and goodness of their God, the children of Israel should so often fall into idolatry, and bow down to images? Yet aren't Christians always doing the very same? After all we have felt, of the love and mercy of our Saviour, in forgiving us, don't we continually set up one idol after another, in our hearts, and bestow on it our best thoughts and affections, that should be His only?

We have seen, that no sooner had the children of Israel got their hands filled with gold, than they made an idol of it, and worshipped it. And how little can our Father trust His children, with the good things of this world! If He make them very clever; give them brains to think, and find out—enable them to search a little way into His wondrous works—how soon they are tempted to take pride in the gift, and forget the Giver! If He set His people in happy homes; surrounding them with bright faces and loving hearts; ah! how hard it is, not to let their beloved ones twine too closely round them, and fill up their affections, till there is no room for Him who gave them, and then the loved idols have to be removed, one by

one, that the Saviour's voice may be heard, and His love come in, to fill the empty heart. And if the Lord trust wealth to His people—enable them to make money—how apt they are to think too much of it, and of the things that money can buy, and to forget that there is a higher purpose to put it to, than to hoard it in their hearts, or spend it all, in pleasing themselves; till God teaches them, as He did the children of Israel, that there is something better to do with gold, than to make it an idol to bow down to. And those who give their money really for the Lord's service, will find by and by, that it brings in a better return, than any the world can give them.

We read next, that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.”

The Lord talked with Moses, as He had done to no man since Abraham, whom He condescended to call His friend. Now; the children of Israel must leave off murmuring against their leader, when they see him standing close to the awful Presence, and admitted to such gracious nearness, by the Lord Himself!

After this wonderful interview, Moses goes back to the camp, and busies himself in his ordinary duties. Notice, brethren, that we are never so well prepared for the duties and trials of the day,


as when we begin it, by being *alone* with God. I pray you all to remember this.

We have now an account of the wonderful and gracious conversation the Lord held with Moses, at the door of the tabernacle, or tent of audience; when He allowed His servant to speak without fear, of what was in his heart. Moses prays that the Lord will let him know who is to go with him, when he has to guide the people to Canaan: “And Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people,” Moses asks it, not on account of any worthiness or deserving of his, but because the Lord had shewn grace and favour to him; and he entreats his God to remember, that Israel is still His people, and that He will make it plainly seen, that He has had mercy on them, by continuing with them, as heretofore. “And the Lord said, My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Moses felt that he could do nothing, unless God were with him: “And he said unto Him, If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” (See how a child of God, values and desires his Father’s

guidance.) Moses lays before his gracious God, all that is in his heart, and reminds Him, that the Pillar of cloud and fire, the visible sign of the Lord's Presence, was the crowning glory of Israel, separating them from all other people; and that Presence remaining with them, shewed to Moses, that his mediation had been accepted; and to the people, that their sin was forgiven.

The Lord, with boundless grace and goodness, allowed His servant to bring his desires before Him, and then granted all he wished: "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favour in My sight, and I know thee by name."

Moses, then, made bold by the Lord's gracious answer, ventures on a wonderful prayer: "He said, I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory"! What? Had he not yet seen the glory of God? Had he not seen it, in the bush, burning with fire, and not consumed, when, we are told, "the God of glory appeared to him"? Had he not seen it, when the Lord led them through the Red Sea, and when Moses himself sang the song of praise, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders"? Had he not seen the awful terrors of Sinai, when the glory of the Lord appeared on the top of the mount, like a devouring fire? Had he not seen God's glory in the tremendous giving of the law; when the mountain smoked, and the thunders crashed, and the



forked lightnings pierced the cloudy veil, shewing the terrible Presence of the God of glory? Yes, brethren, Moses *had* seen it in all these; and still, he prayed, "I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory!" It was the glory of God's character, that he longed to see; not the mere outward tokens of His power and His presence. And it will be the happiness of heaven, to learn more and more, of the character of our God, "the God of salvation"; for to know Him more, will be to love Him more. It has been beautifully said, "If there be prayer in heaven, where all is praise; that prayer will be, 'I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory'!"

The Lord knew what His servant longed for, and gave him directly a gracious answer: "And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Does not the answer teach us what the prayer was? And what did the Lord say? "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

Then the glory of God is His goodness, His loving-kindness! we hear also of His justice, His majesty, His power; but how often, does it echo and re-echo through the Psalms, that "His *mercy* endureth for ever."


"The face of God," Moses could not see; human eyes could not endure the sight; but he was graciously promised, to see all that he could

bear to look on. "And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen." Oh, my brethren, how many thoughts crowd on the mind, while reading those wonderful words! They open to us a glimpse of the glory that Moses saw; "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Now listen, and may the Holy Spirit teach us all!

Moses could not bear at all, to gaze on the awful brightness on mount Sinai, till he was shewn a cleft in the rock, where he was to stand close to the Presence of God. The Lord sheltered him there, and shaded him with His hand, that the intolerable glory might not overpower him.


Hear now the first verse of Ps. xci.: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Moses was then abiding in the secret place, the cleft where the Most High set him, and he was sheltered, by the shadow of the Almighty; the Lord's hand kept him from harm; he stood safe, when the wondrous sight passed before him. Why was that? Because he was hidden in the rock; "and that Rock was Christ." No human being



can see or know anything of God, but through Jesus Christ. He, the only Son of the Father, hath shewn us what God is. In the holy, loving, compassionate, tender, sympathising character of the Saviour, we may see what the God of our salvation is, in a form that we can bear to look upon.

Moses, as the mediator between his people and his God; had been taught much about the gospel, when he was alone with the Lord, on the mount. He knew of the great Mediator to come, for he spoke of Him to the people afterwards, and he wanted to see something of the glory of *redeeming love*, of which the tabernacle and its service, was to be a figure and a foreshadowing. Perhaps when Moses was bowed down before the Lord in prayer, during those forty days, he was told of the great sacrifice to be offered up; he was shewn that the true glory of God, was to be seen, not in the terrors of Sinai, but in the great love of Calvary; that the Lord's chiefest glory, was not seen in the wonders of creation, nor in the giving of a law, dreadful in its holiness; but in the righteous redemption of sinners, in the salvation of His people, and in the restoration of the lost world; and he was shewn how all that was to be accomplished, by the Son of God and man, dying on the "accursed tree." We believe that Moses, as well as Abraham, was permitted to see the day of Christ afar off; and to rejoice in seeing it. It was for His sake,

that he had been content to wander in the wilderness with the people of God, rather than enjoy the splendours of the court of Egypt. Brethren, we know what Christ was to Moses, though he only saw Him from afar. What is He to *you*? Is He the Rock, on which all your trust is built? Is He the Secret Place, in which you love to abide? where your heart and your treasure are laid up? and where you find a peace, that the world and its troubles can't disturb? Ah, think what that cleft in the rock means. It means Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages; cleft for helpless sinners, that they may creep in, and be safe from storm and danger. You know how the Lord Jesus is every thing, to His people. He is their Shepherd, to seek them, Bread and Water of Life, to feed and cleanse them, the Door, by which they get into heaven, and much more. Now, we read of Him, as the Cleft in the Rock, the Hiding-Place, close to the Throne of God, where His children shall be kept safe, in that awful day when the Lord shall "arise to shake terribly the earth," and when all outside that safe Hiding-Place "shall call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" But the miserable lost ones shall call and shriek in vain; nothing can hide the Eye of God from them *now*; nothing can hide them *now* from themselves,





or from one another! There *was* One loving Heart, that would fain have gathered them, safe into the Hiding-Place. There were loving Arms, often stretched out to win them, and Eyes, that shed tears because they would not come. Now, all is past; there is nothing left but judgment: and their accusing conscience, like the whip of small cords, shall hurry them away from the presence of the Judge, into the "blackness of darkness," and the awful companionship of the evil ones for ever! They are lost, lost for evermore!

And how does it fare with those in the Cleft Rock? in the Secret Place beside the Most High? They are safe and happy. How did they get there at first? They were picked up, one by one, out of the mire of sin, and the dust of the world; here one, and there another, by the Blessed Spirit, that the Saviour sent down in His own place, to gather His people together unto Him. Many, very many, are safe already; and more are coming still. Whenever a sinner is brought to his right mind, and desires to lay the burden of his sins on the Saviour, and to lead a better life, trusting in His love to help him; then, like the lost son, who was awakened to feel his misery in the far country, and came home to his father; that poor returning sinner is met and welcomed by his heavenly Father's love, and safely housed among God's hidden ones; and He says to them, when the storm draws near, "Come, my people, enter thou

into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain," Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

One thing more, my brethren, about the Cleft in the Rock. (You understand, don't you, that it means Jesus Christ; and that being hidden in the cleft rock, means believing in the crucified Saviour.) The greatest sinner may flee in there, and be safe: nothing can touch him. But it's not enough for a child of God, to feel himself *safe*; he wants to be *holy* as well. Now see what provision was made for *that*, in the Cleft Rock. When the Rock of our Salvation was cleft for us,—when the heart of Jesus was pierced by the soldier's spear,—when He was hanging on the cross,—you remember that both blood and water, flowed from the wound. The blood, was His life-blood, that saved us from death; and the water, shewed the Holy Spirit, that cleanses, and makes us fit for heaven.

My friends, bless God for having given such a perfect Saviour, and such a complete salvation. Jesus came to save His people, not *in* their sins, but "*from* their sins." He was not content with merely saving them from hell. He makes them holy, like Himself, that He may take them to heaven. Now, don't, I beseech you, don't, any of

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you, be among those that He had to weep over, because they wouldn't come to Him, and let Him save them. Find out, each one of you, if Jesus is your Saviour: if not, the fault is none of His. He is ready, and willing, and anxious to save and cleanse you. He was Abraham's Saviour, and Moses' Saviour, and He is yours, the moment you go to Him. Oh go! "Take with you words." Tell Him all you fear, and all you want, and all you haven't got; and ask Him if it is really true, that He won't turn back any helpless creature who wants to come to Him, and be at peace, and to leave off bad ways? Ah, how glad you will be, some day!



## EXODUS XXXIV.

**B**EFORE Moses was to be permitted a sight of the glory, he longed to look upon, he had the Lord's work to do. As the covenant had been broken by the people's sin, all had to be done over again: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount." Moses was to go alone. The children of Israel are now to be tried again, whether they will behave better when their leader is away; they were ordered to keep strictly within their tents, and the flocks and herds were not to feed in the front of the mountain; neither man nor beast was to be seen.

Moses did as the Lord commanded. He hewed two tables of stone like the first, and took them in his hand when he went early in the morning, up to mount Sinai: "And the Lord descended in the

cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." Though He is just about to make Himself more clearly known to His servant, the Lord was still veiled in clouds. Much more was hidden, than Moses could bear to see or know.

Now listen, brethren, to the blessed name. The Lord had given His name to Moses before, as "I Am," the God who lives for ever, without beginning or end: but now He is going to make Himself known, as the God of mercy and forgiveness, as well as of justice and truth.

The glory of the Lord passed before Moses: it was only a passing by, only a glimpse, that could be seen on earth. Moses must wait till he reach heaven for its full enjoyment: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Doesn't David echo these noble words, when he draws a picture, as it were, of the God of salvation? "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For

as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. . . . The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children ; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them," Ps. ciii.

Moses was satisfied. The Lord had granted his prayer ; and he " made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Safely hidden in the cleft of the rock, he saw the Lord as the God of redemption, and he gave Him thanksgiving for His great glory. My brethren, we cannot leave the Cleft in the Rock, without noticing how well David knew about it, as the place of refuge. He says, " In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ; He shall set me up upon a rock," Ps. xxvii. 5. And again, in a time of distress, he cried unto God Most High, " In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast," Ps. lvii. 1.

My brethren, do you know that refuge ? It is wide enough, to take you all in. It has sheltered every believer since Adam fell, " and yet, there is room." Jesus still cries, " Come, my people ;" " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—rest and loving care for ever. Don't you stay outside ; don't keep away from the Saviour. You don't need any

making ready, any betterness, before you trust in Him—you can't get any, till you come to Him. Mind, you are *hidden* in the Cleft of the Rock, as Moses was; nothing of yours is to be seen. Only Jesus, and His perfect goodness, can bear the glory of God's countenance—only *His* work, is ever fit for God to look at. You must rest in Jesus, and on Him alone, for salvation. But then remember what there is in Him. Mind what flowed from His cleft side: not only blood, but water. Blood, to save you from death; and living water, the Holy Spirit, to cleanse, and make you ready for heaven.

Oh, brethren, remember this, that you so often hear; that our Saviour Jesus Christ, gave Himself for us, not just to save us from death, but “that He might redeem us from all iniquity,”—take away from us all *love* and *practice* of sin, as well as its punishment, “and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” So that Christians are to be noticed above all men, for godly, upright, blameless behaviour, and for kindness and good feeling to all around them. It is only the Spirit of Christ that can make us like that; but He will, if we faithfully ask Him.

When Moses heard the voice of the Lord, proclaiming His Name, as the God of grace and goodness, he fell down before the glory, and worshipped; and he prayed a very earnest prayer, encouraged by what he had just heard of the

Lord's pardoning mercy: "And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." Notice what Moses prays for: for God's presence with them, for the pardon of their sins, and that God would make them His own people. He prayed that God would go with them, because the people were a stiff-necked race, that could only be ruled and guided by the Lord Himself, dwelling among them. The greatness of their sin and need, was the reason for asking more of God's goodness. Take this people for Thine inheritance, Moses prays; and stiff-necked and rebellious as they are, make them into a peculiar people for Thyself.

Isn't that, just what the Spirit of Christ is doing now, with many? He finds men and women, careless, self-willed sinners; and He never leaves them, till He has made them saints, through faith in Jesus.

Then the Lord said, He would make a fresh covenant with the people. He promises what He will do on His part; and He commands what they are to do, on theirs. Promises and precepts, were to go together.

The Lord promised, that He would do wonders among His people, so that all the neighbouring nations should see, and confess the work of the Lord; and He would drive out all the wicked in-



habitants of Canaan before them, and make room for His own people, in the land He had promised their fathers: and the children of Israel were to take care, and have nothing to do with those idolatrous nations, or make any covenant with them, but were to “destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves,” lest they should become a snare to them, and teach them their corrupt and abominable ways.

On their part, the people were, farther, to obey the commands of the Lord. There were two things they were strictly forbidden to do. First, they were to worship no other god than the one true God: “for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

The Lord had, as it were, betrothed His people to Himself, as their God and King; and He was very jealous of their forsaking His worship, and turning aside after any of the false gods, and abominations of the heathen nations round them. Secondly, they were not to worship the true God by images. That was the great sin the people had committed, when they made the golden calf, and fell down before it, by way of a likeness of their glorious God, who had led them out of Egypt. The Lord will not be worshipped by means of images or pictures, or any object whatever. He is a Spirit, and can only be truly worshipped, by the hearts and spirits of men—not through their eyes. My brethren, we can only see God by *faith*

now. He has given us no likeness of Himself, to see with our bodily eyes, no visible<sup>d</sup> object of worship. The worship of Christians is entirely *spiritual*; coming from hearts that are taught by God the Holy Spirit; and the less men's minds are distracted and disturbed, by things placed before their eyes, the better.

The Lord again told His people Israel, many things that they were to observe and do, when they should come into their own land.

The first was the keeping of the Passover, in memory of their deliverance from Egypt: "The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt." The month Abib was to be from that time, the first month of the year; to remind the children of Israel that they were to begin a new life, as a redeemed people. And, my friends, *we* have to remember that, as well as they.

And the Lord reminded His people, that all their first-born were His. The calves and lambs, were to be brought for sacrifice; but their sons were to be redeemed with a piece of money. You notice how carefully, the children of Israel were kept in mind of redemption!

Then the holy rest of the Sabbath was again commanded to be observed: "Six days thou shalt work; but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in

earing-time and in harvest thou shalt rest." Do you notice that? They were not to gather in their hay or corn on Sunday, because it might rain on Monday! They were to be *obedient*, and leave the consequences to God's care.

Again, all the men were ordered to appear three times a year, before the Lord, to worship in the place where He had set His name: and He shewed His care for His people Israel, by promising that their land should be quite safe from enemies, during the time when its defenders were away from their homes, serving the Lord their God, at His holy place. The holy place was, first, the Tabernacle, and then, the Temple at Jerusalem. The reason why men were obliged to go to that one place, to worship the Lord at the solemn feasts, was because it was a type or figure (and the only one upon earth) of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone, any worship that is acceptable to God, can be offered. You know He says Himself, "No man can come to the Father but by Me."

But now that He has come, and redeemed the world by His death, we don't need a holy place any longer; for any spot, and every spot, on earth or sea, is fit to worship Him in. Wherever there is a humble, believing heart, seeking to rise up to Him in love and thankfulness, *there* is worship that pleases God. Jesus may be found everywhere; and He has promised to be especially in the midst, whenever a little company of two or

three believers meet together in His name, to pray and praise, and learn about Him.

My brethren, why should not your own homes be blessed with the Saviour's presence? Why should you not meet Him, in every place where your daily work may be? Remember that God has promised to dwell with the humble and lowly in heart; and the humblest home, will be a happy home, when He is there. And let us be thankful, that while, in His tender mercy, He lets His people come near to Him in private, in their hearts and homes; He has appointed houses of prayer, where they may gather together on His holy day; to offer up united prayer and praise, to hear His blessed Word, and be instructed and admonished in all things, belonging to true faith and godly living. Let us so use God's good gifts, that by His grace, we may be able to render up our account with joy, in that day when our great Master, shall come to reckon with His servants!

Moses was commanded to write down all the directions that the Lord gave him: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water: and He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." The covenant was made over again, that the children of Israel

might see that their sin was pardoned, and that the Lord had not altered His intentions, on account of their rebellion against Him.

Now, my brethren, give heed to this. The people of Israel were not *now* under the covenant of perfect obedience to God's holy law. They had once promised, and undertaken to keep it, little thinking how far below it, they were. That law said, "Do this, and live." Of course, they broke it directly; and the bargain was at an end. They now knew they were ruined sinners, lying at God's mercy. And mercy they did receive. A new agreement was made—a covenant of pardoning mercy through a mediator. To *him* the children of Israel now look; their mediator stands between them, and the God, whose holy and just law, they have broken, and at *his* prayer, they are pardoned. But the Lord gives the ten commandments again. Though they had been broken by the people, and the very tables of stone on which they were written, are lying dashed to pieces at the bottom of the mount, the Lord gives them again. He wrote upon the fresh tables that Moses hewed, "the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Why? Was there any use in giving them again? The people could never keep them any better. No. But God's law is always the same. It is a perfect law; it cannot be relaxed or changed, because fallen men can't obey it.

The ten commandments were given again, as

God's unchanging law; and in the right time, One was to come, in man's nature, and keep them, in man's place. My brethren, Jesus Christ has come. He has kept all God's commandments as a Man; and He has won heaven for His people, by His perfect obedience. Then our obedience is not wanted, to get us to heaven? No; and well for us that it isn't; for the very best we can do, can't take us within sight of the door; we should never get there, if we had to depend on ourselves. Our best keeping of God's commandments, is not good enough, to win heaven; and it's not wanted for that, because Jesus has won it already for us; but our obedience is wanted, that we may follow the Saviour's steps. He walked all His life, in the path of God's commandments. He has thereby earned eternal life in heaven, for us. We have only to stretch out our hands to take the gift, He offers us: to give Him the love of our whole hearts, in return, and to strive to keep God's commandments, as long as we live, that we may please Him, and grow more like Him.

Ah, my friends, what a different thing, a service of love is, from a service of fear!

Striving to obey the commandments, that fallen sinners might get to heaven for doing it, was a service of terror; because, to fail in the very least thing, was to die: for God's children—to try and keep them, that they may get nearer the Saviour they love—is a service of blessing; for to fail, is

but to go to Him, in sorrowful confession, while He forgives the failure, and helps them to try again, and do better.

Oh, bless the Lord, for having given us a holy law to walk by, and in which we have the footsteps of Jesus to guide us; for we believe that holiness and happiness are fast bound together, and can never be put asunder.

We read that Moses had again been with the Lord on the mount, for forty days and forty nights; when he neither did eat bread, nor drink water. He knew what he was speaking about, when he said afterwards, that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live." Moses had been listening to the words of the Lord; he was sustained by the same power, that afterwards kept Elijah the prophet alive, and enabled the Lord Jesus Christ to endure a forty days' fast, in the wilderness. "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand (when he came down from the mount), that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him." Was it because he was honoured to be the bearer of God's law, "glorious in its holiness," to men; that Moses' face shone? or had it caught a reflection of the glory, he was allowed to see so near?

St Paul says, that "the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the

glory of his countenance.” As mediator between the Lord and the people, he had been permitted to enter into the cloud—he had seen the glory of God. When the Lord passed by him so close, He had left the mark of His glorious presence, on the face of His servant, who was himself unconscious, that he bore about him the dazzling token, that he had been so long near to God.

Did the shining of Moses’ face not shew, that he had been accepted as mediator? and as such, had been allowed so close an approach to the awful presence, that he had borne some of its glory back to earth with him? “And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone: and they were afraid to come nigh him.” Even the reflected beams of God’s glory were too bright for human eyes to look at steadily: the people were afraid to go too near; and they who had not been afraid often to murmur and rebel against Moses, in spite of all the mighty works he had done before them, now trembled when they saw him, with the glory on his brow! They see plainly, that he is their appointed leader and guide, for the Lord has visibly stamped him as His own servant. Will they ever again dare to rebel against him? Ah! those who read the Bible, know how soon they forgot all they had seen, and provoked the anger of their long-suffering God!

It is interesting to notice that, long after, when



the Son of Man, in the days of His humiliation, appeared for a short time in glory, before His disciples on the holy mount; they too were afraid, when they saw the well-known features, beaming with the brightness of heaven: and when the glory passed, and they came down, and met a great crowd, that had gathered at the foot of the mount to wait for Jesus, in hopes of seeing a miracle; what was it, that made the people "greatly amazed" when they saw Him? There was nothing in the ordinary humble appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, to attract attention, and excite astonishment; was it not because there lingered on His face some beams of "the excellent glory" that none could look at, unmoved? And perhaps many, who saw the spotless life of the Son of God, who heard from His lips, words such as "never man spake," who witnessed His deeds of power, and His daily acts of tenderest compassion, and yet "saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him," were thus permitted to behold His face, still bright with rays of heavenly glory, that they might be left without excuse for their unbelief.

Brethren, do we look in the face of Jesus Christ, and see in it, the glory of God? If we cling to Him now, as our hope, we shall one day, "behold His glory!"

When Moses saw that the people held aloof, he called to them to come near, and "Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him;"

and when he found what had made them afraid, he put a veil over his face. "And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh : and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with Him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone : and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him."

Now, my brethren, can *we* learn anything from this? You think, maybe, that the shining of Moses' face, was something beyond common, that you and I, can have nothing to do with? But it is one of the things that were written for our learning, so we must see if we can gather any teaching from it. What caused the shining on the face of Moses? It was a light, reflected from the brightness of God's glory, which he had looked at, so near and so earnestly, that his own countenance caught some of its beams. It was, his being let to stand so close to God, that made Moses' face shine: it was allowed to none but him (as mediator between the Lord and the children of Israel) to go, in the body, so near to God's immediate presence; and therefore we never read of any other man

whose face shone, except the Man Christ Jesus; He, who emptied Himself of His glory, for our sakes, for a while.

Yet, my brethren, Christians are commanded to shine; not in their *faces*, but in their *lives*; and the shining of Moses' face, may be a sort of shewing forth, of the light that shines from a holy example. Both come from the same cause—nearness to God. Moses was near to God in his body, on mount Sinai; for a particular purpose. The true Christian lives near to God, in his spirit, for a particular purpose too; besides his own happiness. The Lord Jesus tells us what that purpose is: "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." *Your* light, said he. Why, what light have we? The light that He gives us. Is not Jesus Himself "the Sun of righteousness"? "the Light of the world"? Yes, and because *He* is, so are His people. He says to them "Ye are the light of the world"; but it is with a light that is borrowed from *Him*. Christians are to be like the moon, which shines with light reflected from the sun. They are to walk "in the light of God's countenance," that their holy example may shine, and give light to others.

The moon has no light of her own—none but what she borrows from the sun; and Christians have no holiness of their own, but what they draw from Christ.

The moon's beams are not strong and steady like the sun, giving light and heat to all things; her shining comes and goes, waxes and wanes (and the Christian's inconsistent walk is like that); but yet she gives light enough to walk by, and hinders the earth from being all dark, when the sun is gone. And that is what the church of Christ, the company of true believers, has to do in this world, while the Lord is gone to heaven. She has to hold Him forth, the Light of truth; and gather a family around Him, out of all lands.

And what every child of God has to do, in his own house, and in his own neighbourhood; is to let the light of a holy example shine around, trying to win those about him, to the love of the Saviour.

Now, dear friends, we must not content ourselves with finding out what others have to do; we must learn our own duty, and how to do it.

Moses teaches us, that the way to shine before men, is to keep very close to God. It is the Christian who prays most in secret, who is enabled to shine brightest in the world. "Abide in me," says the Saviour; "without me ye can do nothing." Go then to Him. Mind that no work worth doing, can be done without His grace. We cannot be either safe, or happy ourselves, till we have cast ourselves entirely on His mercy. We can do nothing for others, till our own hearts are filled with His love. Perhaps the time is

short, my brethren. If you've not begun to shine yet, begin now ; and remember to let no day pass, without your seeking the Spirit's grace.

You know a lamp that burns brightly, uses up its oil quickly ; don't be like those foolish ones, who were content to see the light in their lamps, but neglected a supply of oil to feed the flame, till too late, to repair their awful mistake. If you would be happy, and if you would be useful men and women, keep always near the Saviour ; in love, and trust, and thankfulness, and He will make your lives on earth, like the path of the just, "shine more and more unto the perfect day" ; and perhaps He will give you the joy of holding out a guiding light by the way, and helping some lost wanderer home—that blessed home where all shall shine in the light of God's love !



## EXODUS XXXV. XXXVI.

“**A**ND Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words that the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.”

Though the people are now to be employed on a particular work for the Lord's service, He made them clearly understand that they were not to do it, on the holy Sabbath of rest. Doing God's work, was to be no excuse for breaking God's law.

The day of rest was to be very strictly observed. The people were not allowed even to light a fire in their houses on that day. They didn't need any, for they had no cooking to do. The manna did not fall on the Sabbath, and all they required, was to be baked or boiled the day before.

And then Moses told the people about the Lord's offering, which you remember we heard

of, when he went up to mount Sinai, to receive God's commandments the first time.

The people were asked to bring a willing offering for the Lord's service, out of the good that He had so bountifully bestowed on them ; for we have seen that the Lord did not let His people leave Egypt like a set of runaway slaves, with nothing but the clothes on their backs. He inclined their oppressors to load them with riches, of silver, and gold, and jewels, and everything that their hearts desired ; and they had got more since, so that they were amply provided with whatever was needful for the work : and, best of all, they had grateful hearts, and open hands ; and the Lord accepted the willing gifts of His people.

Hear again the words of Moses : " This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord : whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord (you see whatever is offered to the Lord, must be of free-will) ; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim-wood, and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, and onyx-stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate." And you recollect, that the Lord said He would give wisdom and skill, to all the people that were employed, that they might be able to do all the

different things that were needful. There was first the Tabernacle itself: all its parts were to be made and finished separately, with the greatest exactness, that they might fit into each other, when it was set up. And there were the sacred things that were to stand in it: the ark with the mercy-seat, and the veil, and the golden altar of incense, and the golden candlestick, and the table of shew-bread, these were all to be inside: and in the court was to stand; first, the brazen altar for the burnt-offerings; and then, the laver, or bath. We must consider each of these a little, by and by. Then, there were besides; curtains to be spun, and holy garments for the priests, to be spun and sewed; so that there was plenty for all to do, both men and women.

We can fancy how thankful the children of Israel would be, that they were allowed, to bring an offering to their God! It was a proof to them that He had forgiven their sin, and taken them again for His own people: and as they stood in the presence of their mediator, listening to his words, and seeing the glory beaming from his face, though it was veiled; their hearts glowed, and their eyes sparkled with joy; and their only thought was, how they could ever bring enough, of the very best they had, to shew their gratitude: "And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every



one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all its service, and for the holy garments." Of course there would be some who liked their gold and silver too well, to be ready to give any away, but in general, the people gave nobly: "And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord." Do you see that? They gave their own personal ornaments: the women brought their ear-rings, and bracelets, and whatever jewels they had to wear, that they prized most. How thoroughly in earnest they must have been, when they could sacrifice these things, and give them up willingly, for God's service! What a rebuke those Hebrew women are, to many Christians! Are there many among us, who would keep down the love of dress, who would dress as simply and plainly, as their station permitted, in order that they might have more to give for their Saviour's service? Are there many who deny themselves *anything* for His sake? who save upon themselves that they may have a little to spare for Him? This is for us all to think of, my friends. It concerns us all; for we each owe a debt to God, and all have *something* to give to Him. Some of the people of Israel brought fine linen, and skins, and wool, and shittim-wood,—

both the rich and the poorer among them, came, and willingly brought their offerings : “ And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and did bring that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.” Those who might have little to give, came forward to spin the wool and goats’ hair, that others had brought,—nothing was left unprovided for : “ The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring, for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.”

And Moses pointed out the two men, that the Lord had chosen to be the chief workmen, to do the finest of the work. They were filled with wisdom to understand, and skill to execute, all the various works ; and to be the teachers, and overlookers of all that were employed.

Those two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, the Lord “ filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.”

The next chapter tells us how earnestly they all set to work. All the offerings were brought to Moses, and every one had to go to him, to get what was needed for his particular work. And

the giving still went on. "They brought yet unto Moses free-offerings every morning."

What a noble, liberal spirit filled the people! When told that they might bring an offering to the Lord, they rejoiced in the chance that was given them, and each one thought only how much, he might bring. There was nothing like unwillingness. No man said to his neighbour, How little will do, do you think? If I give so much, will it be thought enough? No, no; there were no questions of that kind, because there was no grudging. Men and women came forward every day, and frankly offered the best they had, and more, far more than was wanted, for we read that "all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from the work which they made; and they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make." How pleasant to read of! They were no niggards, these children of Israel! When their hearts were touched, they filled their hands very full; just as their descendants did long afterwards, in the days of king David, when they brought him a noble offering for the building of the temple. For we read that "the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy," to see his people forgetting themselves, that they

might give largely to the Lord's work: and he said, "Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name, . . . . for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. . . . O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own." But David looked higher than all the glittering heaps of silver, and gold, and jewels; he knew what gave them their value in the Lord's eyes, and he said, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee," 1 Chron. xxix. That was it, brethren; it was the willing heart, that gave its value to the gift. Few have the power to offer costly gifts, like king David and his princes, but all can do something, like the Hebrew men and women; for those that had no gold or silver, gave brass; and they that had no brass, could bring wood, or linen, or wool. Some could only give oil or spices; and they, who perhaps had little to give, offered their time, and the labour of their hands. Why were the people so ready to give up the things they valued? Wasn't it because their hearts were touched by their God's forgiving love? Had He not just pardoned them their great sin in forsak-

ing Him—making a golden calf, and setting it up as their god to worship? And how can they do enough, to shew their thankful sense of His mercy? My brethren, do we, as Christian people, not owe as much to our God, as the Hebrews did? Nay; do we not owe a great deal more? *We* see things clearly, that they had only a dim and distant glimpse of. We have the blessed Saviour Himself, and the Holy Spirit, made known to us in the Word of God; and they only learned indistinctly about them, by means of the tabernacle services: and shall we, who have received so much, be content to return little or nothing, to Him who has given us all? And even those who are true Christians among us, who know that for Jesus' sake, their sins are pardoned; do they love much, because they feel that they have been much forgiven? are they really denying themselves things they might rightly have, that they may be better able to help His cause in the world? The question, How much are we bound to offer to God? is very simply and easily answered; but it is a question that no true Christian would ever ask. The Lord answers it Himself, when He says to each of His children, "Give me thine heart;" because *where* the heart is gone, all else will want to follow—because, when you have given your heart to Jesus, you are joined to Him, His cause becomes your cause, His service becomes your delight, and to help on His work, you will gladly

make sacrifices, and give up your own pleasure, that you may have a little more to offer to Him who has “loved you with an everlasting love,” Jer. xxxi. 3, and has “washed you from your sins in His own blood.” Ah! when we think that for *our* sakes, Jesus, who was so rich in the joy, and glory, and happiness, and love of heaven; left it all, and became poor; so poor, that He was more homeless than the very birds and beasts, for He had not even the humblest roof to shelter Him, but had to accept the charity of those about Him,—so poor, that at the most awful time of His life, He had not a single friend to watch, in sympathy with His agonising sorrow, or to stand by Him, and comfort Him by his presence during the mock trial, where justice and truth were set at naught by those who were determined to take His life,—when we think of the want of all things which He endured, to make us rich for ever, shall we not be glad, and rejoice that there is anything we can give, that there is any service we can render, to prove how gratefully, and how dearly we love Him? The Lord Jesus taught His people how to give. It was by self-sacrifice. He did not offer to God, what cost Him nothing. He gave *Himself* for us. Ah, my brethren! we are called by His name; let us pray and strive to follow, however humbly, in His steps!

So gladly and liberally, had the children of Israel answered the call of Moses, that he was

obliged to stop them. "And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." All was ready for the tabernacle to be made. What a cheerful, busy scene the camp of Israel must have presented! So many beautiful and costly works going on at once: joiners, smelters, goldsmiths, carvers, engravers, jewellers, all plying their different arts, with skilful hands and willing hearts.

And the women were not behind the men. They span, and wove fine linen, and coloured cloth, and goats' hair, and sewed, and embroidered in gold, and in bright colours, with busy fingers and right good will; while Bezaleel and Aholiab both wrought themselves, and gave careful heed to all the others, to see that they kept exactly, to the patterns that Moses set before them.

Now, my friends, the account of the tabernacle is very instructive: we can only look slightly at it, but give your best attention, and try to take it in.

The tabernacle was a tent, which was first set up in the wilderness. It was God's dwelling-place on earth, where He met with men. The Lord had said to Moses, that the children of Israel were to "make Him a sanctuary, where He might

dwell among them ;” and during the forty days that Moses was on mount Sinai, he was receiving most particular directions from God Himself about it—how it was to be formed—what it was to be made of—how every part was to be finished separately, to be set up, and taken down, whenever the Lord commanded. These directions were all according to the idea in God’s mind ; and He gave a plan, and pattern of everything to Moses, which he was to follow with the most perfect exactness. “Look,” said God, “that thou make them after their pattern which was shewed to thee in the mount.”

The tent, or tabernacle, was about fifty-five feet long, and eighteen wide. The two sides, and one end, were made of boards, of the wood of the shittah tree, which was very hard and tough, and not liable to decay. The boards were covered inside and out, with plates of pure gold, and each was fitted into two sockets of silver. The sides were compacted together, and strengthened by bars of shittim wood, covered with gold. The east end of the tent was open, supported on five pillars, also of wood, and covered with pure gold. Over that strong and shining framework, four sets of curtains were spread, which covered it all over, and hung down to the ground, except on the front, where they were looped up to form the entrance. The inside was divided into two apartments : the outer was called the Holy Place ; and the inner, which was smaller,



and divided from the Holy Place by a very richly-wrought veil or curtain; was called the Most Holy, or the Holiest of all. The innermost set of curtains were of fine twined linen, wrought with figures of cherubim, in blue, and purple, and scarlet; over these was another set, of goats' hair. The third covering, was made of rams' skins dyed red, and the outer of all, was of badgers' skins, or dressed leather, which protected all within. Such was the figure of the tabernacle; and every board, and bar, and socket, and curtain, and loop, and even the smallest pin in it, was full of meaning. Every part was to teach some truth, about God's great plan of redemption and salvation, to the children of Israel; and through them, to Christians afterwards; and it would be a great blessing to the church in these days, if God's "Pattern" were more thoughtfully studied!

You remember, my brethren, that the Tabernacle, was a picture of Jesus Christ, in His person and in His work, drawn by the Holy Spirit; so it is well worth our best efforts to understand. Let us seek His help, to make it plain to us!

The foundations of the tabernacle, were the silver sockets, that the framework was fitted into, to stand upright. Now, when we see where that silver came from, we shall know their meaning.

The sockets were made out of the silver money that was paid to the Lord, as the ransom of every man that was numbered among the children of Israel. All paid the same. Every man, rich and

poor alike, brought the same silver coin, half a shekel, as "atonement money," or ransom for his soul, chap. xxx. 12-16.

There we learn Redemption: the mighty work that Jesus came to accomplish. The world's redemption is the foundation of the gospel. It was for that, that God sent His Son. It was for that, that Jesus gave Himself to die. The gospel, the good news of man's salvation, stands on redeeming love, as the tabernacle, stood on the ransom silver.


What came next? The framework of wooden boards, covered entirely by pure gold, and bound together by bars of the same, was fixed firmly into the sockets of silver. Redemption being God's intention, a Redeemer had to be found. When God, in His love and pity, determined to redeem the lost world, He looked around, as it were, for one to accomplish the tremendous work; but there was no one. He said, "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me," Isa. lxiii. 5. God not only resolved to provide redemption, for the ruined world, He provided the Redeemer too; One who should be so near to God, that He could uphold His glory and truth, while He became sinful man's nearest of kin, to redeem his lost inheritance. So God sent His only beloved Son, to take fallen man's nature, but without sin; and be both God and man at once: to act for God His Father, on the

one hand; and for man, His brother, on the other.

That perfect Redeemer, God and man in two distinct natures, but only one Person; was shewn forth by the framework of the tabernacle: the pure gold, to signify the Godhead, and the wood, to signify the Manhood of Jesus Christ. The wood and the gold were brought close together, but remained quite separate. The two can't be mingled or mixed; for they are of contrary natures. You may join pure gold, and wood together in the closest union—you may make both into one thing—but you can't *mix* the two, in the very least. The wood in the tabernacle, was covered all over, enclosed in pure gold; yet the wood and the gold kept entirely distinct. Mind, brethren, that this was God's own pattern or picture of the Person of our Redeemer. The Son of God took our very nature, just as we have it, only without sin (which human nature *need* not have), unto His glorious Godhead. The manhood, or human nature, remained perfectly separate, and distinct from the Godhead, or nature of God; but it was surrounded, and strengthened, and supported by it, just as the wooden boards were enclosed, and strengthened, and supported, by the pure gold; and the gold and the wood together, made but one tabernacle; as the Godhead and the Manhood of Jesus, made together one Redeemer; not by confusing or mixing the two natures together, but by joining them into one

Person. Just as your soul and body together make one man, "so God and man together, make one Christ." His being God Almighty, did not hinder Him from being, at the very same time, a weary, or hungry, or sorrowful Man; but it bore Him up, and strengthened Him to suffer; while His human weakness, did not prevent his exerting the mighty power of God. We can't understand this wonderful truth but we can well believe it, and bless God for our perfect Saviour; whom we can worship, and rest on as God Almighty, and love and trust, as our very own Brother and Friend!

In reading about Him in the Testament, you remember how often, Jesus shewed Himself to be Almighty God, at the very time when He was walking about, a Man among men, and subject to all the sinless infirmities of our nature. There was a striking instance one evening, when, after a very hard day, He got into a boat with His disciples, to cross the lake that He might get away for a little while, from the crowds of people that were thronging round Him, so that He had no time to rest. They had hardly set sail, when Jesus fell asleep, quite worn out with the fatigues of the day. But presently, there arose a sudden and violent storm on the lake, which filled the boat with water, so that it was in great danger of sinking. The disciples were very much frightened, and they went to awake their Master, who was lying peacefully




asleep in the stern of the boat. He had lain down a weary Man, too tired to be easily disturbed by the roaring of the winds and waves; but at their call, "He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still," and the winds and the sea heard their Maker's voice, and were hushed and quiet: "The wind ceased, and there was a great calm." It was He, Jesus, the Redeemer, God and Man in one, who was to be shewn to the children of Israel by the Tabernacle, with its boards of wood and pure gold; which, St Paul says, "was a figure for the time then present," Heb. ix. 9, till the set time came, for Him to be born into the world.

The bars of wood covered with gold, which strengthened and kept the boards firmly in their upright position, shewed that our Redeemer, perfect God and perfect Man, was strong and mighty to save. As the gold strengthened the wood, so the nature of God in Him, strengthened and sustained His human nature, that He was able to bear the crushing load of the world's sins, and the curse of God, on account of that sin. Jesus "was made a *curse* for us." He bore the penalty instead of us. He endured all—the just wrath of a holy God—the extremest rage and malice of the devil—and we, for *whom* He endured all, can form no idea of the tremendous burden. We think so lightly of sin, that we can have very little notion how God hates it, even though we know, that it

cost Him His beloved Son's life. Jesus pitied and felt for us in our misery, as only *man* could feel ; He helped and saved, as only *God* could save. God's mighty power, and man's pitying sympathy, met in Him, and made Him our perfect Redeemer. My brethren, remember that the fault will not lie with God, if any of you are not saved !

We read that there were two apartments in the Tabernacle. The outer was called the Holy Place ; it represented the true church of Christ on earth, which contains only believing people ; gathered in all time, and from all lands, unto Him. The Most Holy, shewed heaven itself, where the Presence of God is. The Most Holy, was separated from the Holy Place, by a veil or curtain of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, richly wrought with figures of cherubim. This veil was to shew the spotless human nature of Jesus, "glorious in its holiness." It was of pure white linen, wrought with blue, and purple, and scarlet. The white, signified His stainless purity—the sky-blue, that He belonged to heaven—the royal purple, His kingly dignity—and the scarlet, or blood red, that He came to die, to shed His blood. Those colours, blue, and purple, and scarlet or crimson, with the pure white, are the only colours used in the Tabernacle ; and they always describe the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The veil was curiously wrought, and embroidered with needlework. The human body of Jesus, was



expressly wrought by the power of God the Holy Spirit. He says Himself, "A body hast Thou prepared me," Heb. x. 5. The veil was hung before the Most Holy Place. Till Jesus became Man, and died for sinners, there was no way for fallen men to be restored, and get to heaven; but His death opened the way. All the good men who died in old times, before Christ was born, were taken to heaven because Jesus was going to die. His death, in the place of sinners, was determined on, before the world was made, so that souls were saved on account of what he was coming down to do. We may well say, with thankful hearts, that God's "mercy endureth for ever," when we consider that sinful man has never been without a Saviour!

We read, that at the very moment when Jesus gave up His Spirit, and died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; shewing that the way to heaven, "the Holiest of all," is open to all who will enter through Him.

Remember, dear brethren, that unless God had given His Son—unless the Saviour had given His life in our stead—the gates of heaven could never have opened to any child of man. But now, He who died on Calvary, is alive for evermore. He is in heaven, appearing before God in the Most Holy Place, on our behalf. He is preparing His home for all who love

Him, and is waiting till they are all ready, for Him to come for them.

Ah ! don't let His patient waiting, be in vain, for any of you !





## EXODUS XXXVII.

**WE** come now to the holy things that were to stand in the inside of the tabernacle. They were all made by God's command, and strictly according to the pattern He gave to Moses.

You remember, my brethren, that all those Jewish ordinances had a Christian meaning. The Jews couldn't see their meaning so clearly as we may do, because we have the New Testament to help us; but thoughtful and believing men among them, knew that the tabernacle and its services, were to teach them to look forward to good things, to come long after, in God's time.

This was the way the gospel was preached to the people of Israel; and no doubt, many of them would take pains to understand it. We know that everything there, was a picture of Jesus Christ, and the work He was to do: and all the Hebrews knew that the tabernacle was God's house, and its service was the only way they could worship Him aright, for He had expressly arranged it Himself.

While we try to consider those Jewish types

with their Christian meaning, let us thank God for the clear teaching, He has given to us in the New Testament; and bless Him that we live in gospel times.

The first thing we read is, "And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood." The ark was a chest rather more than four feet long, two feet and a half broad, and two feet and a half high. "And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about." There was made a golden ring at each corner, for two staves to pass through, to carry it by; and the staves, like the ark itself, were made of hard, durable wood, and covered all over with plates of gold. The lid of the ark was made of solid, pure gold. It was called the mercy-seat, and at each end of it, was a golden figure of a cherub, not separate from it, but wrought out of the same piece of gold as the mercy-seat itself: "And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; towards the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat."

Now, O Lord, we pray Thee, "open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"!

The ark of the testimony shewed Jesus Christ in His Person, and in His offices—both what He was, and what He came to do. It was made of wood that did not decay; which was covered, inside and out, with pure gold. You remember that was to shew His double nature, joined together in one Person. The wood, which grows out of the ground, meant His human, or earthly nature; and the pure gold, covering and strengthening the wood in every part, within and without, shewed His divine and heavenly nature, sustaining His Manhood. And as the pure gold, not only supported and strengthened the wood of the ark, but gave it a value it had not before; so the Godhead of Jesus, not only enables Him to bear all the awful burden of man's sin, and of God's anger against it, but gave a value and power, to His human sufferings and death, which made them amply sufficient to satisfy God's justice completely; for the blood that was shed, was the blood of God, as well as of man, and the perfect obedience of the Man Christ Jesus, was the righteousness of God Himself. Thus our Redeemer was at once "God and man in one Christ;" and therefore perfectly fitted to stand between God, and man, for He had the nature and the feelings of both.

Let this grand truth be the rest and comfort of our souls, though we cannot understand it now!

The crown of gold round the ark, shewed that Jesus was a King. He is called the King of right-

eousness, the King of peace, the King of the Jews, the King of saints, the King of kings. The whole Bible speaks of His royalty. "His kingdom ruleth over all;" and when He comes again as the King, to reign, His righteous rule shall be felt, and acknowledged, and obeyed, by all in earth, as well as in heaven.

Jesus now reigns in the hearts of His believing people—He rules by the power of love. Brethren, submit yourselves to Christ as your King! He brings peace, and holiness, and happiness, into the hearts that are opened to Him.

The ark was called the Ark of the Testimony; because the tables of testimony, the two tables of stone, which had the law of God, the ten commandments, written on them; were put into it. Doesn't that remind us of Jesus, who kept God's law with His whole heart? He says to His Father, "Thy testimonies are my delight. . . . I have loved Thy commandments . . . Thy word have I hid in my heart." The lid, or mercy-seat, was closed down upon the tables of the law, that they could not be seen; and it was sprinkled with blood, once a year, on the great day of atonement; to teach, that in the sight of God, the holy and just law appears no more against His people, since Jesus obeyed it with a perfect heart, in their place, and shed His blood once for all, making complete amends for man's having broken it. The golden cherubim, fixed to the mercy-seat, and bending

over it from either end, perhaps shewed the redeemed children of God; joined to Christ—resting in Him—looking towards one another with brotherly love—and bending over the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, as the foundation on which they stand, that is, on the sacrifice of the death of Christ; while the cloud of glory shining above, shewed God the Father, looking down well pleased, on sinners ransomed through the blood of His Son. Or, “the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the mercy-seat,” may signify the attributes of God: His holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, all made to agree perfectly together, by the blood of Christ: as we read, that in Him, who has covered the sins of His people, “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” Whichever way we understand the cherubim, the meaning is plain, that God and sinners can meet together in peace, since Jesus has died. The mercy-seat is the meeting place; when any poor creature “comes to himself,” and feels that he is a sinner, that he has broken God’s commandments, and never tried to please Him in any way, and that there is nothing but eternal misery before him. When such a one wants to seek after God, and cries, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” Job xxiii. 3, let him go to the mercy-seat! God has said, “There I will meet with thee.”

But the ark is gone! there is no mercy-seat now, for poor sinners to go to. Oh yes, there is! There is Jesus, the true Ark, the real Mercy-Seat. "Jesus is set forth by God to be a propitiation (or mercy-seat), through faith in His blood." You have only to cast yourselves on Him, and beg Him to take your sins away. Jesus is the Mercy-Seat, where every lost sinner may go, and meet with a loving, forgiving, merciful Father. Didn't the prodigal go there? and he didn't find his father's door closed against him: no, nor his heart neither. The Father goes, as it were, to meet every wanderer, that He sees coming to the mercy-seat, looking for the Saviour. Will any of you stay away? Oh, my brethren, don't! it will be fearful to despise the blood of God's own Son. The very devils are not so bad as that, for they never had redeeming-blood shed for *them*—they never had a mercy-seat to go to. That blood was shed for *man*. It was shed for *you*. Take care, how you neglect it; take care, how you let yourselves be so taken up with this world, and your everyday concerns, that you've no time to find out how you stand, for the world to come—no time nor heart to ask yourselves, whether the blood of Christ has done anything for *you*. Be sure it *has*. Be very sure, that God did not part with the Son of His love, for no purpose. If the blood of Jesus Christ be not your best of blessings, it will be your heaviest curse! That precious blood was not

given to be despised and trodden under foot by any ; it was given to be trusted in, and prized, as the life of our souls and bodies for ever ; it was given to open the gate of heaven, and that we might be made fit to dwell there. Blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, to shew that unless Jesus had died, there could have been no forgiveness of sins, for any man.

My brethren, try to think how utterly hateful sin must be to God, when it put such an awful distance between Him and the sinner ! Think how mighty, His love must have been to our fallen world, when it made Him give up His own Son to die, that He might deliver men from the power of sin, and bring them back to heaven, from the very gates of hell ! Ah ! what *can* it be, to live for ever under the anger of God, and the curse of sin ; when Jesus could willingly go through His life on earth, His agony and death, to save us from it ? What can the glorious rest of heaven be, when He could gladly endure a long banishment Himself, for the joy of bringing His loved ones there, to share it with Him ?

Consider these things, dear brethren ; and then, resolve, by God's grace, to give yourselves, body and spirit, to *Him*. You little know how He cares for *you* !

Before we leave the ark, we must notice that it had two staves to carry it by. They were never to be taken out, that it might always be in readiness to move. The ark always went with the

children of Israel, in their long wanderings through the wilderness; when the host halted, and pitched their tents, the ark of God was always in the midst of them; and it went before them into the promised land. Does that teach us, that Christians should always carry their religion with them, wherever they may be? that they should go nowhere, nor engage in any business, without the presence and blessing of their God? that they should seek to have Christ always dwelling in their hearts by faith? always present with them, as their Guide, and Companion, and Friend?

Saviour! Thy presence is Thy people's best joy on earth, and their blessedness in heaven!

The next thing we read of, is the table of shewbread.

Like the ark, it was to be made of shittim-wood, and overlaid with pure gold, with a crown of gold all round the top. It was also to be carried by staves through golden rings at each corner: "And God said, And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway."

The shewbread was to be baked into twelve cakes of the finest flour; they were to be set in two rows on the pure golden table, before the Lord. It was called shewbread, or presence bread, because it was fit to be set in the King's presence. And sweet incense was laid upon the shewbread, on each row.

Now the table again shews us the *Person* of



Christ; both God and man. The lowly wood, covered and made precious, by the pure gold. And the loaves, placed on the table, shew Jesus in His *work*. They teach us that, as natural bread, prepared by kneading and fire, is the staff and support of our natural life, so Jesus, in His suffering and death, is the food of our souls—the Bread from heaven; and that if we feed on Him by faith, we shall never die, but have everlasting life. There were twelve cakes or loaves, one for each tribe of Israel; and each loaf was more than enough for one man; to shew that there is in Jesus, more than enough to supply every one, and every want; that there “is bread enough and to spare” in the Father’s house.

Jesus Christ, by the infinite merit of His death, made atonement enough for the sins of the whole world; and whoever will, may go to Him, and find rest and peace for his soul, from knowing that *his* share of the fearful burden, has been borne away by the Saviour. He has but to eat of that Bread, which the Father sent down from heaven, and “live for ever”! Are any of *you* in want? do any of you feel that earthly things don’t make you happy? that even good luck, as you call it, doesn’t content you, when you get it, but leaves you hungering for something more? Then, listen. Jesus says, “I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

Every Sabbath day, fresh loaves of the finest flour were to be brought by the people, and placed by the priests on the table ; and the priests were also to eat those that they took away, in the Holy Place. We learn many lessons here. The loaves, carefully prepared from the purest flour, laid upon the golden table before the Lord, and perfumed by sweet incense, we have seen to shew Christ's work, and Christ's Person, and God's pleasure in them. Christ's death on the cross, was more than enough to make full amends to God's justice ; and it was well pleasing in His sight, because Jesus was God, as well as Man. Ah, my brethren, why should any of us be lost, when God has made such rich provision for our salvation ?

When the fresh loaves were put on the golden table, the old ones were eaten by the priests, but the frankincense was burnt : That was the Lord's part ; shewing that both God and man had a share in the sacrifice of Christ's death. The sweet savour rising to heaven, taught that the Father was well content, and that the death of His Son was precious in His sight. The clouds of sweet smelling smoke rising from the burning incense, were also used to signify the intercession of Jesus, (or the acceptable prayer He is always offering to God, for His people). And, perhaps, the priests eating the loaves in the holy place, at the same time the incense was burning ; teaches us that while Christians live by faith, and enjoy fellowship

with their Saviour here, they all the while keep looking up to Him, who is pleading for them at God's right hand in heaven.

Again ; the fresh shewbread was to be placed on the table, every Sabbath morning. The old story of God's great love, is always new and fresh to the believing heart. There is plenty in Jesus, for the daily food, and the daily refreshing of His people : and He only, is to be set before them, faithfully and continually preached, according to God's Word. For, if they do not feed on Christ by faith as their daily bread, their spiritual life will become weak, and they will not be the living, loving, active Christians they should be. And sinners will not be gathered in, unless Christ be clearly and constantly preached, as the only, the all-sufficient Saviour, through whom alone, we can receive forgiveness of sins.

We noticed that the pure fine flour for the Presence bread, was to be brought by the children of Israel. Does that teach us that Christians must bring an offering to their God, of the best that they have, as an acknowledgment that their daily bread comes from His hand ? St Paul says they should offer *themselves*. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1 ; and David says, "I will sing and give praise with the best member that I

have," Ps. cviii. 8 (P. B. V.). Surely when we know something of what Jesus has done for us, we shall find it a joy, to be allowed to do, or give, anything for Him! But how little notion we have, of being grateful to God! How apt we are to take all the good things He gives us, as a matter of course, or as if we had ourselves to thank for them in some way! We seldom think where our blessings really come from, till they are gone from us, or we are in danger of losing them, and then perhaps we think ourselves hardly used. Unthankfulness to God, is a mark of fallen man. I believe that the natural heart is too full of self, to have any room for gratitude to God. It was after David felt that He had helped him in trouble, and delivered his soul from death, that he said, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" Ps. cxvi. 12. Let us remember this—that the closer we keep to Jesus, the more we shall have of His Spirit, and the more disposed we shall be, to bless the Lord at all times, for being "kind, even to the unthankful and the evil."

We now come to another of the holy things, that were to be made for the inside, of the tabernacle. The golden candlestick. Hear what the Lord commanded Moses. "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made. . . . And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his



bowls, his knops, and his flowers, were of the same: And six branches going out of the sides thereof." Three on one side, and three on the other. "Their knops and their branches were all of the same; all of it one beaten work of pure gold." And there were to be seven lamps, with bowls to hold the oil and give light, and snuffers of pure gold, to trim the lamps, that the light might be bright and clear. Every thing about the candlesticks, was to be of pure beaten gold. Now, brethren, when you hear that the golden candlestick, with its seven branches, and its seven lamps, was set in the Holy Place to give it light, (for there were no windows, nor light of the sun there), you will readily see its Christian meaning, and think of Him, who is the Light of the world, the Light of life, and the Light of His church. The stately golden shaft, rising in the midst of its branches, blossoming into buds and flowers, and towering above them all, with its "coronet of light," the pure oil, flowing from it into each lamp, make it a beautiful picture of Jesus, as the Centre and Head of His body, the church, ("which is the blessed company of believing people") and the Source of her light, and life, and fruitfulness, by the Holy Spirit, flowing into her from Him. Let us consider the golden candlestick more closely; for it is the heavenly pattern which the Lord gave, of the church, and her Head; His people, and their Saviour.

The candlestick, with all its branches and ornaments, was made of beaten gold, melted in the furnace, and beaten by successive blows from the workman's hand, into the form it was to bear. Ah! does not that plainly teach, what Jesus had to go through, in order to become our Saviour? He had to take our human nature, and was "perfected through suffering": "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" . . . "He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. . . . For our transgression was He stricken. . . . The Lord made the iniquities of us all to meet on Him," Isa. liii.; and the awful burden pressed Him down to the grave. But as the pure gold, which was tried in the fire, and then beaten by the goldsmith's hammer; came forth at last, strong and stately in form, rich in its varied beauty, and fitted in every way for the office it was to fulfil, of being the light-bearer in God's house: so Jesus came forth from the darkness of the tomb, into which He had been crushed, by the weight of blows dealt on Him, in God's fiery wrath against sin, and went up to the Father's right hand; where He sits as the King of glory, the Light and Joy of heaven, to uphold and sustain His church on earth: enabling her by His Spirit, to break the gloom of an evil world. "A light shining in a dark place,"

not wide enough yet, to chase its darkness away, but clear enough to point the way to heaven, and guide the weary feet of many and many a wanderer home.

The golden candlestick had an upright stem or shaft, supporting six branches, three on either side ; and each branch was exactly like the middle one, only of lesser proportions ; while the oil, pure and clear, flowed from the golden shaft into all the branches, and fed the seven lamps. “The golden candlestick, with its seven lamps at the end of the seven branches, was a type or figure of God’s church (His believing people) standing in Christ, (He is the shaft of gold), and supplied by the Spirit with light and life.”

When the Lord Jesus was just going to die, He told His church, which only consisted of a few disciples then, that when He went back to heaven, He would send down the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would guide them into all truth. And that blessed Spirit still dwells with God’s people, cleansing and teaching them, and making them by degrees more like their Saviour ; bringing forth the buds, and flowers, and fruits of Christian graces and good works, to the glory of God. But the church must keep close to her Head, or she will give no light to the world, any more than the attendant lamps could light up the holy place, if they were broken off from the shaft, which supplied them with oil. The Lord says, “Without me, ye

can do nothing," John xv. 5; and if His people would live, and work, and *shine* for Him, in this dark world, they must be always seeking grace, and strength, and wisdom, and faith, and love from Him. His Spirit can supply every one, according to his need, out of the fulness of Christ our Lord.

My brethren, you have not to go far, to seek those blessings. "The word is very nigh you," Deut. xxx. 14. The Lord has brought His righteousness near, even into your hearts, if you will turn to receive it. Think how long and patiently the Saviour has been knocking at these hearts of yours,—will you not open, and let Him in? He will bring light, and peace, and strength with Him now, and the "fulness of joy" by and by.

The lamps on the candlestick were to be lighted every morning, and burn till evening; and in the evening they were to be supplied with fresh oil, and burn on all night, till the oil was done. The lamps were allowed to go out, for want of oil and trimming. Was that to teach, that believers need the continual help of the Holy Spirit, for the power of enlightening and helping others? and also of the watchful care of the Lord Jesus? The priest was to remove the snuff, and trim the lamps every morning, using a pair of golden snuffers. Doesn't that shew, that we must seek to have God's work revived in our souls every day, by the diligent use of the means He has provided? Prayer, and



praise, and reading the Holy Word are the golden snuffers to brighten the grace that is in us; that, "laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us," Heb. xii. 1, we may run patiently, and work earnestly, and shine brightly for our Master.

The golden candlestick has much more to teach. It stood in the holy place, and gave light to the tabernacle, but its beams did not spread further around. So the Jewish church, which had been planted by God Himself, and had His holy commandments given for a lamp, and His laws for a light, did not shine beyond the land of Israel. It was not meant to enlighten the world, but to point to the True Light which was to come.

The whole world was lying in gross darkness, when Jesus Christ, "The Light," was born.

Among the Gentiles, the heathen nations, the light of conscience was put out by wicked indulgence, and wilful ignorance. They did not like to keep up any knowledge of God, and so were given over to their own awful ways; their darkness might indeed be felt: and as for the Jews, their priests must have lost the golden snuffers, for they lived in dismal twilight. The light of the law burned very dim.


The lamp of God's Word, was hidden under a bushel of human traditions. When the true Light appeared, He had to complain that the commandments of God, were made of none effect, because the scribes and pharisees taught that their own,

inventions, and the sayings of the elders, were to be obeyed instead.

The light of the Jewish candlestick was fast waning away, when the "Day-star," the "Sun of righteousness," arose on the world. He came to be both "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel." The world is not light yet, the prince of darkness still rules over it; but it shall not be for long: out of the darkness light shall arise. The "Star out of Jacob," Num. xxiv. 17, so long hidden by clouds, shall rise again.

The lamp of God's love shall again be lighted on mount Zion, and its beams shall shine over all the earth. "The Gentiles shall come to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising," Isa. lx. 3; for Jesus of Nazareth, the Light of the world, the Bridegroom of his church, and the King of the Jews, shall reign on the throne of His Father David. "And His people shall be all righteous," Isa. lx. 21. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for thy King cometh. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isa. xix. 20.

My brethren, follow Jesus as your guiding light now; and you will by and by, enter into His joy!



## EXODUS XXXVII. XXXVIII.

**WE** have not quite done yet with the golden candlestick. It was to burn continually in the holy place, which would have had hardly any light without it, only what came in at the entrance. The Lord might have had the holy place made light, by letting in the sunbeams; but He left it almost in darkness, and the bright and beautiful things inside, and the curtained ceiling, with its rich colours and embroidered figures. could not be clearly made out till the lamps were lighted on the golden candlestick.

Was that to teach that the things of God cannot be understood by the "light of nature," as they call it?

Man can examine and find out a great deal about the works of God,—he can learn very much about the wonders of creation, by the use, and the improvement of the powers that God has given him; but what can he know from any of them, of the *will* of God? What can they teach him about *himself*,—about the *real* state of the world he lives

in, or about the wonders of redemption? Shut the Bible, and the "book of nature" can tell you nothing about these things. Another light is needed, to put away the darkness that surrounds you. St Paul says that the things of God, can only be perceived and understood, through the Spirit of God, made known to us in His word; and it is a sorrowful thing, to see men spending their lives in searching into God's wonderful works in creation—carefully studying even the smallest, and, as we should say, the least important; while they care not to search His word, and find out what it says about His will, utterly neglecting Him, who came to die for them; groping among His creatures, by the feeble glimmer of "sparks of their own kindling," instead of coming to the light, that they may be taught to know Him who is Light and Love. Why should that be? Why are so many men content to walk blindfold in the broad sunshine? to grovel among earthly things, instead of rising to the true knowledge of God? We would not judge them; but the Lord Himself answers: "'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'" Does that not mean, that men won't believe the gospel, which would make them holy, because they don't want to part with some favourite sins? They are afraid of "coming to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved." You know, brethren,

that *knowledge* is not *love*. A man may have his head filled with knowledge; he may be able to examine the wonders that God has made; he may be able to describe the fishes of the sea, or arrange the creeping creatures of the earth; he may be able to count the stars in the sky, and tell when a comet will return; he may understand all these, and much more, and all the while, his heart be as cold as the snow, never feeling one throb of gratitude and love to God, and his ways, not the ways of purity and peace. To know something of God's glorious and wonderful works, is both pleasant and profitable; but "one thing is needful;" and that is, to know God, as our Father, and Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of our souls: and it is to teach lost sinners that needful knowledge, that God has given the Bible, for a lamp to guide them, and that the Lord Jesus has set His church, His faithful people in the world, "like a light shining in a dark place," to gather many out of the mire of sin and ignorance, and point out the way to the Saviour, until He comes again.

Now listen to some beautiful words: "A lamp shining in a dark place, makes for itself a little circle of light all about it. Such should each Christian man be, the centre of a circle of light in the midst of a dark world: the light of truth should be upon his lips; the light of holiness in his life: he should point sinners to God, shew them where their danger and their safety lie, and

light them out the way to heaven." True Christians must be light bearers, and let its rays shine in the face of men, shewing that they are neither afraid nor ashamed, of serving a Master whom the world doesn't follow, but that they love Him and His service, better than all the world could give them: for they are at peace with God through Him, and would not exchange that, for any earthly pleasure. And their light must shine *at home*. The candle isn't to be stowed away under the bed, for fear of its being seen; Christians are not to be afraid of shewing what they are—they are not to do as worldly people do, for fear of being laughed at; their light is to be set on the table, where all who come in may see it, and learn how the love and peace of God can make even the poorest of His children contented and cheerful, for they are looking forward to a better home, by and by.

My brethren, are you trying to let your light shine in the sight of men? Not always carrying it abroad, speaking about religion to all you meet, but *living* it yourselves, in your own homes, so that all who have anything to do with you, may, not maybe, *hear*, but *see* and *feel*, that you have the love of God in you? Ah! if we even tried to do that, how different every village, and parish, and town in our land, would soon be! how blessed we ourselves should be—busy for our Master now, and longing for the time, when we shall see His face, and be with Him for ever!

The altar of incense was the last thing to be made, for the inside of the tabernacle. It was small and square, made of shittim wood, and covered with gold like the ark and the table; and it had a crown of pure gold round the top, a golden horn at each corner, and two golden rings to put the staves in, to carry it by.

The golden altar was to be set quite at the far end of the Holy Place, close to the veil that hung down before the Holiest of all. It was to stand just opposite the ark with the mercy-seat, and was very near it, only the veil was between. The golden altar was for burning incense on: every morning, when Aaron the priest trimmed the lamps on the golden candlestick, he was to burn incense on the altar; and every evening, when he lighted the lamps, he was to burn incense on it. There was to be no sacrifice burnt, nor any offering of any kind, laid on the golden altar; except once a year, on the great day of atonement, blood was to be sprinkled on its horns. Nothing was to be burnt on it, but the sweet incense that the Lord had expressly ordered, to be made from the purest and richest spices, and which was forbidden to be used for any other purpose, on pain of death; so that from the golden altar, a continual smoke went up before the Lord, filling the whole place with sweetest fragrance.

Here, again, we have a type of Jesus. It seems as though the Holy Spirit were never weary of

shewing us pictures of Him ; and truly it would take many, to give us an idea of our Saviour, in the perfection of His character, His fitness for His office, and the completeness of His work.

In the golden altar, with its clouds of perfumed smoke always going up, and filling both the Holy Place, and the Holiest behind the veil, with its sweet odours ; we see Jesus in heaven, as the High Priest of His people, pleading for them, and offering continual prayers, which the Father accepts, and delights in, for the sake of His well-beloved Son, “who loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour,” Eph. v. 1.

Brethren ; the death of Jesus Christ, both God and Man, was so vast and never-ending in its goodness, so continually and perfectly pleasing to God, that for its sake, He receives every sinner who comes to Him, trusting in that Blood, and accepts every prayer, offered truly in that blessed name.

When you think of Jesus in heaven, you must remember that He has taken His human body there, with His loving heart, and tender sympathies—sharing His people’s sorrows and troubles—making kindly allowance for their ignorance and mistakes—feeling for them in temptation and difficulty—and “caring for them” through all ! Oh ! will you be afraid to tell your inmost thoughts and fears to Him, who has shewn that He loves



you with a Brother's heart? who suffered even to death, that He might buy the right to save, and help, and comfort you? And He knows how hard His people sometimes find it to pray, even to *Him*; so He has promised the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, and teach us to pray as we ought; and now, through His merits, the poor prayers of God's children are for ever going up, like the clouds of sweet incense, to their Father's ear. Oh! why do men not turn to such a Saviour? Could God have done *more* for creatures who have sense to know right from wrong? Is He to *drag* them up, whether they will or no? Will it be His fault if men perish? No, brethren, no. When men sink into hell, it is because they *would* take their own way, in spite of the Spirit's striving within them; when they reach heaven, it is because they were led to follow in His way. Men's ruin is through their own fault; their salvation is through God's mercy.

No bleeding offering was laid on the golden altar, only pure incense with its curls of smoke breathing sweetness all around. Jesus having once died, dies no more. No more sacrifice is needed. There is no sin offering in heaven. His offering was made on earth, once; made for all, and made for ever. It can never be done again, and it needs not; for it is amply sufficient.

So now He lives in heaven, carrying on His work there; pleading the merits of His death in

behalf of all who will come to God through Him ; and God can refuse nothing, that is asked for the sake of that most precious blood. Go to the Father now ; tell Him you are resting all your hopes of pardon and peace, on the Saviour's death ; tell Him that you hate your sins, and want to put them away, and lead holy lives, and He will hear you, and bestow forgiveness for the past, and strength for days to come, because Jesus bore away your burden of guilt long ago, when He died on the cross ; and you will be safe for ever, and always growing better, for Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for His people ; their life can never end ; for it is bound up in His ; He has said, " because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19.

On the great and solemn day of atonement, which came round once a year ; when the Lord looked down on His tabernacle, He saw the horns of the golden altar sprinkled with blood, while the wreaths of smoke curled up in the midst, and rose in fragrance towards heaven. Was that not to teach that it was the *death* of Jesus for His people, that gave Him the right to intercede for them ? Had there been no blood shed, there could have been no prayer, no pardon, and no acceptance for sinners. Had Jesus not died in our place, we could never live through Him. Remember, brethren, that Christ crucified, is our only hope. He is the " Rock of Ages " ; rest firmly on *Him*, and you shall never be moved.

We have now looked at the different holy things, made for the inside of the tabernacle, in the same order that they are spoken of, in this chapter. Let us count them, one by one. First of all, was the ark of the testimony, with the ten commandments in it, and the mercy-seat, with the cherubim for its lid; that stood alone, in the Holiest of all. Then the heavy and richly-wrought veil, to divide the Most Holy from the Holy Place; and in the Holy Place stood the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick, and the golden altar of incense.

The candlestick was made of pure beaten gold; the ark, table, and altar, of wood, covered all over with pure gold, to shew that Jesus was both God and Man. The veil, which was made of spotless linen and rich colours, and cherubim curiously wrought, to shew His pure and spotless human nature. And the roof of the tabernacle, or ceiling, had the same beautiful colours and embroidery of needlework as the veil. And there was a hanging for the door, of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen, and needlework, supported on brazen pillars, ornamented with gold; while the walls and pillars at the entrance, to support the hanging, were of wood, covered with pure gold; shadowing forth the holy, sinless human body of Jesus, supported and strengthened by His Godhead.

And all that splendour and glory, could only be perceived by the light of the golden candlestick, as the things of God can only be seen

and understood, by the light of the Spirit of God.

But, blessed be our Father ; that Holy, indwelling Spirit of light, and love, and holiness, is the gift of the risen Saviour to His people, and to be sought for by diligent prayer. Let none of us, then, stay in the darkness of ignorance and sin, when we might have the light of life !

We come now, to the court of the Tabernacle. It was a space of less than two hundred feet in length, and a little less than fifty in breadth ; and was enclosed by hangings of fine-twined linen, supported on pillars of brass, finished with silver. It had only one opening ; “and the hanging for the gate of the court, was needlework of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen,” supported on four pillars of brass, ornamented with silver. Whoever wished to enter, must go in at that only gate.

Does that not remind you of Jesus, who says, “I am the Way. . . . No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. I am the Door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” ?

The gate of the court was exactly opposite the door of the tabernacle ; and in a straight line between the two, but nearer the entrance, stood the brazen altar of burnt-offering. That was the first thing a man came to, on going into the court. This altar was very large ; eight or nine feet square,

and five feet high ; it was made of shittim wood, and overlaid within and without with brass ; with horns of the same, on the four corners, and brazen rings and staves, to carry it by. The altar was a hollow square, with a grating or network of brass, let down into the middle, half way from the top, to hold the sacrifice. Everything about it, all the needful vessels and implements, were made of brass, so it came to be called the brazen altar. The daily burnt sacrifice was to be offered there. This is what the Lord commanded Moses : “ Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar ; two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning, and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even : and with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil ; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before the Lord ; where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar.”

My brethren, try to fancy what a solemn sight that altar must have been to the children of Israel ! All over the camp, they could see the clouds of smoke, and the flames rising into the air, fed by the bodies of innocent animals, that were killed twice every day, to be burnt upon it ; while their blood was sprinkled on the altar's horns, and poured out on the ground at its foot. And the fire was never to go out : by day it blazed high, as the devouring flames seized on the victims that were laid on it, for the daily sacrifice ; while he who should look out from his tent door, in the restlessness of a sleepless night, saw the undying fire gleaming through the darkness, in front of the tabernacle, on which rested the awful Pillar, the token of the Lord's presence. It was from the Pillar of cloud and flame, that the fire was first kindled on the altar. What did the brazen altar say to the believing Israelite ? It spoke both of fear and comfort.

The fierce flames continually blazing, would remind him of the terrors of Sinai, when the mountain did burn with fire, and the people said in their dread, " Why should we die ? for this great fire will consume us." They felt they were sinners, and they saw their holy God as a consuming fire in His wrath against sin, from which they could not escape ; and " who can dwell with everlasting burnings ? "

But when the God-fearing Israelites looked

away from the flames to the victim that was to feed them, the sight of the innocent lamb slain—its warm blood poured out on the ground—its quivering limbs cut to pieces, and given to the devouring fire; and knowing that this was expressly ordered by God Himself, he would learn from that sight, that God had appointed a remedy: that instead of the sinners themselves being consumed in the fire of His wrath, an innocent Victim was to take their place, and be condemned instead of them—and he would be comforted. He might point to the blazing altar before His children, and say to them, See what wrong-doers deserve! The wrath of our God is always burning against sin, like yonder fire; we must be sorry for our faults, and go before Him with the sin offering that He has commanded, that we may be accepted, and find mercy in His sight. Brethren, if the sight of the altar of burnt-offering could give comfort and peace to a believing Jew, in those old dim days before the “Sun of righteousness” was risen on our world, what should it say to *us* who live in these latter times, when the clear light of the gospel is shining around? What should Christians learn from it?

Look now,—the brazen altar has much blessed truth to teach, and all about Jesus. It was made of brass, very strong, to bear the weight of the whole burnt sacrifice that was laid on it; but not so pure and precious as gold, and much less

thought of: our Redeemer in His low estate, “despised and rejected of men,” in the days of His flesh was strong to bear our burden of guilt and sin, and mighty to save us from its punishment. The altar was four square; it had a front on every side, open to all comers: so Jesus stands ready to receive all who will come to Him—from north and south, from east and west, all are welcome. He is ready and willing to save all, wherever they come from—He will refuse none, no one shall be cast out.

There were four horns on the altar, one at each corner; what did they mean? They were meant, first, to bind the animal to, that was brought to be killed, that it might not get away, as we read in Ps. cviii., “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” So was our Sacrifice bound, that He might suffer in our place. Not with “the cords of a man,” for He could easily have broken these, but with the willing bonds of love. He would not draw back from the agony. He would not escape from death. He laid down His life. No man took it from Him. It was not the cross that killed Him; He gave His life a willing sacrifice—for He loved His Father’s glory, and He loved the souls of men. Oh, Jesus, Jesus! How is it that we do not love Thee more? Bind our hearts to Thee, and keep us Thine for ever!

The horn was used to express power. Jesus came in the great power of God to save us. His



death had such merit that it had power to make amends for the world's sin, and to link man to God again. And the horns spoke of refuge and safety. The criminal who fled from the law, and took hold of the horns of the altar, was allowed to escape; he had sought the refuge of the sanctuary, and was not to be dragged away from it, unless he were a wilful murderer. And is not Jesus Christ the Ark of Safety, the Refuge of sinners? The worst of criminals may flee to Him, and the law cannot drag him away. The sword of justice cannot harm him, he is safe; because he has fled for refuge to the Saviour of sinners, and neither death nor the evil one can part them. Jesus can save every sinner but the unbeliever, that wilful murderer of his own soul. The Christian can see that everything about the brazen altar shewed forth Jesus. He is the pure and spotless Sacrifice, the Lamb of God who was slain to take away the sin of the world. He is the High Priest who offered Himself without spot to God; and He is the Altar which received the offering, and sustained it under the weight of the consuming wrath which burnt it up: the Altar to which all may come to lay their sins on the head of the Sacrifice, and hear from the lips of the Great High Priest, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace."

My brethren, only try to think of the deep pity, the boundless love that filled the heart of Jesus

towards fallen man. For He knew all that lay before Him. He saw the tabernacle building, and knew well what was meant by every part of it: He knew that the altar, and the bleeding victims, and the burning fat, signified Himself; in the agony of soul and body, and the cruel death which were to come upon Him; and He did not draw back from the awful undertaking. Led on by love, He was willing to die, "and make His soul an offering for sin." He saw the golden candlestick lighting up the dark places with its brilliant rays, and He knew that His coming should give light to the world, and gather in all who would follow Him, out of darkness into the light of life. And so He delighted to do His Father's will, "for the joy that was set before Him;" He stedfastly set Himself to "endure the cross, despising the shame," and is now on high, receiving His people's prayers, and offering them with the sweet incense of His own merits and intercession, continually before the throne of God. That great joy was the saving of His church—the presenting a family of ransomed believing ones to His Father. Ah! will you not try to increase the number all you can, by going to Jesus yourselves, and striving to win others to cast themselves on His mercy? Do, my brethren, and you will grow in holiness now, and have perfect happiness for ever!

The last thing to notice in the court of the tabernacle, was the laver for the priests to wash


in. This is the direction that the Lord gave about it to Moses, "Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations." And then we read how Moses obeyed. By his orders, Bezaleel "made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

It is surely not hard to find out the meaning of the laver. The priests had washed and purified themselves before they came into the presence of God in His house; but the laver was set full of water, before the tabernacle door, on purpose that, after presenting their offerings on the altar, they might wash their hands and feet again, before they could go into the holy place. They passed from the brazen altar to the laver. Now, we know that pure water signifies the Holy Spirit. The laver then would teach us, that though we are saved and justified, or counted holy in God's sight, on account of the death of Jesus in our place, yet we need the daily cleansing and purifying of the

Holy Spirit, to make us what our heavenly Father likes His children to be, and to enable us to please Him in our daily walk. You know we are saved, so soon as we trust in Jesus: but to be *safe* is not enough—we need to be *good* as well. We are saved by the blood of Christ, in order that we may be sanctified, or made good and holy by the Spirit of Christ. For that is God's will about His people, that they should grow like His dear Son—like Jesus, the holy Saviour. And that is by the continual application of the cleansing blood to our souls by the Holy Spirit. For though we have come to Jesus, and are resting on Him as our own Saviour, yet we are weak, and often falling into sin, either in thought, or word, or deed (how many times into all three!), and we need to pray every day, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” Ps. li. 7: and the blood of Jesus is always at hand, and the Spirit is always willing to wash us over and over again every day of our lives, till at last, by His grace, we shall be made quite holy, and Jesus will be able to “present us faultless” before the throne of God's glory!

Think what the cleansing power of that blood must be, when, by it, the Spirit can make such as we are, white and without spot!

Now, mind. The daily washing is not wanted to make believers more safe. They *are* safe, so soon as they cast themselves on Jesus, and shall



never come into condemnation; they have peace with God through the blood of Christ. The daily cleansing through the Spirit is needed, not to win them heaven (which Jesus has done already), but to make them *fit for it*: to make them like Christ in fact, holy and “pure, as He is pure.”

When God’s children fall into sin, as they do every day of their lives, they must go again and again, and seek the Holy Spirit’s help: He will lead them to the blood of Jesus Christ, which is “continually cleansing them from all sin,” and give them strength to overcome, in the daily struggle with the corruptions of their fallen nature.

Do you remember that on the last evening of the Saviour’s life, before He was betrayed into the hands of His enemies, He rose from the supper table, and poured water into a bason, and began to wash His disciples’ feet?

When it came to Peter’s turn, he did not like that his beloved Lord should do such a humble service to him, and he would not let Him at first, till Jesus explained to him what the feet washing meant. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,” shewing Peter that if he were not washed through the Spirit, it would be seen that he had not been saved by the blood. His conversion was to be made quite plain, by his holy living, or it would be no real conversion. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,” Rom. viii. 9. If Peter was to be a lamp of the

golden candlestick, he must be fed daily with the oil of the Spirit's grace, flowing into him from the Lord Jesus Himself, the Head of His people, and "the God of all grace."


The Saviour says, He that has been in the bath, only needs to wash his feet, which get soiled and stained in his daily walk through the miry paths of the world; he needs no more justification, no more saving; that has been done for him by the Lord Jesus once, and for ever: but the Christian longs for more and more holiness of heart and life, and he comes every day to be cleansed afresh. Just because he knows he is safe, he longs to be made *holy*: holiness grows out of salvation, as the buds and blossoms spring from the living branch, and both branch, and flower, and fruit have their life from the living tree: so safety and holiness come from the living Saviour, through the Spirit.

Let us end with St Paul's words: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.


## EXODUS XXXVIII. XXXIX. XL.

**WE** read last, that a laver, or immense bason, was made for the priests to wash in, which was set between the brazen altar, and the door of the tent, or tabernacle. The pure water that the laver was filled with, signified the Holy Spirit. You notice that there were only two things standing in the court of the tabernacle: the first, was the brazen altar of burnt offering, shewing the death of Christ instead of us, and the other, the bath filled with pure water, shewing the Spirit of Christ; to teach that all those who are saved by His death, are made holy through His Spirit. We are saved at once from the guilt and punishment of sin, by Christ's blood; we are cleansed every day from the love and the practice of sin, by the sanctifying Spirit. The blood has saved us from hell. The Spirit is making us fit for heaven.

There is another thing about the laver that we must notice. Do you remember what it was made of? It was made entirely out of the women's brass looking-glasses. That sounds odd, doesn't it?



but in those days, nor for many hundred years after, there were no smooth plates of glass, such as we have now; and polished metal looking-glasses were always used, as they are still, in China and the far east. We are sure those highly polished mirrors were very valuable to their owners. They had been brought from Egypt; parting gifts from the Egyptian women to their Hebrew neighbours; and they must have been made of the very best brass, to bear the fine polish that was needful. One should have thought those precious looking-glasses were the very last things the women of Israel would have parted with: and so they were; for they had given their ornaments before, and their mirrors must have been nearly all they had left. Then how was it? Were those Hebrew women not vain, and fond of dress and admiration, as women commonly are? Did they not think a great deal of their looking-glasses, because they saw themselves in them? No doubt they were just like other women as to that; yet they gave them up willingly, for the service of the Lord's house. They clearly felt that the best they had, was not too good for their God, and little enough to return to Him who had freely given them so much. And yet, my friends, they hadn't half so much to thank God for, as women have in Christian times! The Gospel of Jesus has made a wonderful and merciful change in the condition of woman. It has raised her to man's side, instead of leaving






her to be trodden under foot at his pleasure; it has made her again, what God made her to be, man's equal, companion, and friend, instead of his toy and his slave; and surely women ought to be specially drawn to Him in loving gratitude! But do we see that many professing Christian women in these days are like their Hebrew sisters of old? Do they come gladly forward, when an opportunity offers for giving to the Lord's service, remembering what He has done for *them*? Do they shew themselves willing to give up even the most trifling luxury, for the sake of helping His cause? Oh, how little we know of real Christian liberality! how little notion we have of giving to God anything but what we can never miss! how few there are who deny themselves anything they have set their minds on, for His sake! Isn't it too true, that there are but few women, who, if they were asked to help forward some Christian work, would think of giving up, not their best looking-glasses, but the smallest bit of finery they were going to buy, that its price might add a little to their offering? My sisters, this concerns us all; for it is sadly true, that *self* is uppermost with all, till Jesus is known and served. The mirror that reflects the face is more consulted, more diligently studied, than the glass that shews the heart, the Word of God, which tells the truth, and flatters none.

*Self-love* is the idol to which all gifts, all sacri-

fices are offered ; but when once the sense of sin comes, and Jesus is known and loved as the Saviour from it, then self is put into the background ; and the looking-glass is less cared about, and self-denial begins to be practised, that something more may be spared to help on the cause that is dear to the Saviour's heart—the winning of many souls to glory. Then, in so far as we can help it, let it not be seen any longer, that women, calling themselves by Christ's Name, are content to be so scant and niggard in their offerings to Him ; content to stand so far below those large-hearted, open-handed women of Israel. And you must not fancy they were all rich who gave ; the poor came forward as nobly, and freely offered what was most precious to them, their time and labour, to do the Lord's work. Can it be that our hands are so closely shut, because our hearts are cold ? that we give little, because we love little ? Oh, our God ! if it be so now, take away such chill, selfish hearts from us ; fill us with love to Jesus, that we may know the blessedness of giving !

But we must always remember this : It is not mere *giving* that our God cares for ; *He* has no value for the mere gift, whatever amount of good it may do in the world. St Paul says, that a man may even give his whole property to feed the poor, and yet he is no better for it in the sight of God, (although many poor people might have been kept from starving by it), if his heart be not in his



gift, 1 Cor. xiii. It is the *motive*, “the reason why,” that God looks at. It is the love in the *heart* that makes the offering pleasing to Him, whether it be much or little. You know the touching story in the Gospel (Luke viii.), of the poor woman who came into the open hall of the rich man’s house, where the Lord Jesus was at dinner. She saw Him treated by its master with outward show of civility, but no real kindness; her bursting heart was overflowing, and she hastened to make up for his neglect. Her rushing tears fell in torrents, bathing the Saviour’s weary feet; she dried them carefully with the long thick tresses of her hair, which had lately been her most prized ornament; anointed them with refreshing and costly ointment, perhaps the only treasure she possessed, and covered them with kisses of gratitude and love. She had seen Him in the streets of Jerusalem, surrounded by the poor, and the fallen, and the wretched; attracted by His gracious looks and gentle voice, she had drawn near; she heard the merciful and loving invitation to the “weary and heavy laden,” and could hardly believe it was meant for such as she; but His words sank into her heart. She could not help trusting One who spoke so kindly to the miserable, and rejoiced on finding an opportunity to shew how gratefully she loved Him. And the Saviour turned from His sneering, self-satisfied host, and spoke to the weeping woman the most blessed words that could

fall on a broken heart : “ Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace.” She loved Him much : she had good cause ; and she gave Him the very best she had—a loving and contrite heart, rejoicing to minister humbly to His wants. We have not *Him* to accept our hearts’ devotion in person, as she had ; but we have plenty to help and comfort for His sake, and that is all the same to *Him*. Then let us earnestly pray for grace to feel our sinfulness, to believe in His words, and to love Him, like her. It is the sense of being loved and forgiven, that will make us glad to do all we can for the Saviour.

The laver was the last of the things, or sacred furniture belonging to the tabernacle. We come now to the court or enclosure that the tent itself, and the altar, and the laver stood in.

It was a space, less than two hundred feet long, and not one hundred wide. It had no walls, but was surrounded on all sides by curtains of pure white linen, hung on pillars fitted into sockets of brass, and ornamented with silver. The only gate to go in at, was at the east end ; and instead of a door, there was a hanging or curtain of needle-work, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen ; the same colours exactly, that were used in the tabernacle itself. And we are told that all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about, were of brass. *They* needed to be strong, that were to keep altogether, everything in

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its right place. Perhaps the mention of the pins, may be to shew us that God overlooks nothing as too small and insignificant, that belongs to His service. So the tabernacle was enclosed and separated from the common camping ground of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Whoever wanted to worship God, had to go in by the only entrance, where the beautiful curtain hung. And is not the true church of Christ on earth, separated and distinct from the world? Whoever will be a real Christian, a child of God, must go to Him through Jesus Christ, as He says, "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me"; "I am the Door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," John x. 9. The believing Israelite was taught this great truth, when he came to the beautiful gate (which meant Christ). Entering in, he brought his offering to the brazen altar, saw its blood poured out on the ground, its inwards consumed in the fire, and its whole body burnt without the camp; and knowing that, in like manner, the true Lamb of sacrifice was to be offered to make atonement for sin; he found peace for his soul.

Everything was now finished for the tabernacle and its services, excepting the holy garments for the priests; and we have an interesting notice of the orderly way in which all was done. According to Moses' orders, regular accounts had been kept of all the gold, and silver, and brass, that had been given for the Lord's work, and delivered by

the Levites into the hands of the workmen. The metals were carefully weighed, and the amount set down ; so that it could easily be seen how much of each had been used, and for what purpose. When the tabernacle was finished, those accounts were examined or audited by Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son ; and laid before Moses, by whom they were entered in the history of the building of the Lord's house.

Moses, in this matter, sets a wholesome example of keeping clear and accurate accounts of the outlay of money. And his record shews that his people gave with a self-denying liberality, that Christians might well imitate.

The Lord had before said unto Moses, " Take thou unto thee, Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to me in the priest's office. . . . And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty." In the tabernacle service, the Lord taught His people that they must have a priest, to stand between Him and them, and to act on their behalf. He was to receive their confessions, and to pardon their sins in God's name. Their offerings were all brought to the priest ; he alone could present them to God.

*We* need a priest, my brethren. God can only deal with fallen sinners through a priest : and Aaron, dressed in those holy garments, was to

shew forth our Great High Priest, the only true Priest of the Christian church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must examine those glorious and beautiful garments one by one, and try to learn their true meaning, for every part was planned by God Himself. In considering the first high priest of Israel, who, being but a mortal man, was not suffered to continue long with his people, but died on a lonely mountain-top in the desert; let us look up in faith and see Jesus, the Son of God, our own High Priest, "who is passed into the heavens," where He sits at His Father's right hand, and is making continual prayer for His people. When we hear about Aaron wearing his robes of glory and beauty, let us "*consider Him*"!

The high priest was first arrayed in an inner vesture or coat of fine linen, woven without a seam, and wrought with needlework, which covered him from head to foot, with sleeves down to the wrists, and was bound round the body by a belt or girdle.

We here see Jesus, in His spotless purity and holiness, girded for the great work He had undertaken to do: the snow-white, seamless coat, shewing the perfection of the righteousness He had wrought out; while the inner "girdle of faithfulness," which bound it firmly round Him, shewed Him to "be a merciful and faithful High Priest," ready and willing to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

The snowy seamless vesture shews, too, the perfect holiness without spot or flaw, which all must have who go to heaven. It is "the righteousness of the saints," the perfect goodness which they could not work out for themselves, but has been provided by Jesus our Priest, for them that love Him. His people stand "complete in Him." Next was put on, over the high priest's head, a shorter robe, also seamless and without sleeves. This robe was all pure bright blue, and it had a hem or border of fine white linen, richly worked all round with pomegranates in blue, and purple, and scarlet or crimson.

Of all fruits, the pomegranate is thought to be the most rich in seed. When it is cut open, they are seen in great numbers, embedded in a pulp of a red colour. Surely the fruitful pomegranate, with its many white seeds in ruddy pulp, bordering the robe of heavenly blue; would point to the rich harvest of saved souls—"the great multitude that no man can number, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" !

It shews us Jesus our High Priest, as the "everlasting Father," "bringing many sons unto glory," "through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20; that agreement which He made with God, that He would shed His blood to save sinners. "And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the



hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the Holy Place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not." That was on the great day of atonement, an awfully solemn day for Israel. The people's sins were laid, as it were, on their high priest, who bore them into the presence of God behind the veil, where he made atonement, first for his own, and then for theirs, before the mercy-seat. The people were not allowed to enter the court of the tabernacle—they could not appear before God till their sins were atoned for; which was shewn by their high priest coming out to them from behind the veil—they could not know till then, if his atonement had been accepted. We can imagine how their anxiety would increase every minute that he stayed in the Most Holy Place, for fear there might have been something amiss—some fault committed, or something left undone, for which he had been struck dead in a moment: till at last the sweet sounds from the golden bells reached their listening ears, bringing the joyful news that their priest was living, that his atonement was accepted, and their sins forgiven.

Yes, the children of Israel might well be frightened, when their high priest, a mortal sinful man like themselves, went into the awful Presence in the Holiest of all, and was lost to their sight for a while.

Yet so was our High Priest. After He had given His life for sin, He was laid in the grave, and hidden from the eyes of His disciples and friends, who "mourned and wept" for their loss. But death could not hold him: soon he came forth a Conqueror; for His atonement had been accepted—His people were free! The angel's words, like sweet golden bells in their ears, filled them with "great joy." And when they saw Him again, they were glad. Their night of weeping was gone, and joy had come with the rising sun! And, therefore, now, God's children have no need to fear. Though they lie down in the grave, and are hidden from sight for a while, their risen Lord will not forget them. He will not let His holy ones abide in corruption. He will come for them, and raise them from the dead, and they shall live with Him.

And we have now an High Priest who cannot change. He "is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26; and from His throne on high, the golden bells sweetly sound in the ears of our faith, "Because I live, ye shall live also"; "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," John xiv. 2. Our High Priest is gone to prepare a place for his people: and by and by He will come again, and receive them unto Himself. Till then, let them wait and watch, listening to

His voice in His word, and following in His steps. The glad moment will not be long, till the High Priest, clad in glorious raiment white as the light, His face shining "like the sun in its strength," shall come forth from the Most Holy Place to bless His waiting people. Ah! my brethren, be you among them!

The ephod was the next of the holy garments that was put on. This was a very splendid short tunic, also without a seam like the others. It was worn over the sky-blue robe, and was made of fine twined linen, and woven with blue, and purple, and scarlet, and curiously embroidered with pure gold wire. It was bound round the waist by a girdle of the same rich colours, and golden needlework. On each shoulder-strap of the ephod, or upper garment worn by the high priest, was placed an onyx stone, set in gold, and engraved, as seals are engraved, with the names of the twelve children of Israel, six on each. "And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the Lord commanded Moses." On the front of the ephod was worn the breastplate. It is specially interesting to us. It was a square of the same rich material as the ephod itself: pure white linen, with blue, and purple, and scarlet, and gold embroidery; and in the middle of it were set four rows of precious stones, finely cut and polished, till they flashed and sparkled again; they were set

in gold, and on each stone was engraven the name of one of the tribes of Israel. “And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart when he goeth in before the Lord.” It has been thought that the twelve precious stones were set, three on each side of the square, while the Urim and Thummim were in the middle; these holy words, meaning Light and Perfection, perhaps shewed that the Lord God was in the midst of His people, ready to give counsel and guidance to those who approached Him in the appointed way; for in those days the Holy Bible was not yet given, to light men to the knowledge of the perfect will of God. Thus the high priest bore on his breast and on his shoulders the names of his people before God continually; and every believing Israelite felt with joy that he was represented there. And when the high priest came out and raised his hands in blessing, the believer knew that his sins were pardoned; the sight of the seed-bearing pomegranate, with its blood red pulp, on the border of his robe, shewing him that the blood of the atonement was the fruitful source of all their blessings as a redeemed people.

The splendid ephod, shewing the same colours

we have already seen so often; the blue, purple, and scarlet, with the clean white linen and pure gold, set forth Jesus Christ in His spotless human nature, sustained by the Godhead to suffer; for our Priest came not only to offer a Sacrifice, but to be the Victim Himself, as He was the Altar on which the offering was to be consumed. He said, "I have trodden the winepress *alone*; and of the people there was none with me," Isa. lxiii. 3. We owe all our salvation in every part to Him alone.

We have seen already that the glorious colours of the high priest's garments had each its special meaning as belonging to Jesus. The sky blue shewed that He came from heaven; the royal purple, that He was a king; the scarlet, or blood red, that He came to die; the snowy white, that He was spotless in holiness; and the pure gold, that He was God Himself. And this wondrous Person had a girdle bound round Him, the "girdle of righteousness," Isa. xi. 5, as was foretold of Him. We notice that the whole dress, robes as well as girdle, was richly wrought with needlework. Now, as the Lord Jesus Christ appears as the High Priest of His people, representing them all before God, and they are one with Him; does that needlework, wrought with great care and pains, not mean "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 22; that is, the per-

fect goodness that Jesus has wrought out for His church, His ransomed ones? When He shall present them without spot to His Father; His Bride, the church, "shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," Ps. xlv. 14, her wedding garment, His glorious gift; and she shall be called by His name, "The Lord our righteousness!" Jer. xxxiii. 16. Oh, who can think what that blessedness shall be?

But while His people are struggling here, fighting the weary battle of life, striving against their own evil habits, beaten back again and again, and almost sinking under their trials and their weakness, let them look up in faith, and see their ever-living High Priest interceding for them. He carries His ransomed church on the "shoulders of His might;" she is safe from falling: and every suffering believer may look up and see his own very name written on that heart of love; while the golden bells sound sweetly in his ear, "My sheep shall never perish"; "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10.

The last thing which gave its finishing grace to the Jewish high priest's dress, was the mitre or diadem—the head-dress of kings and priests, joined in one.

It was different from any other. There was first the white linen turban, or high cap, which was the priestly head-dress; it was fixed within the

kingly crown. "And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD." That was its crowning glory. This sacred head-dress belonged to the high priest of the Jews alone. No man on earth has had the right to wear it since. The Jewish high priest wore it, as being the type of Him whose right it is. No prince or priest who ever lived on earth (save One) could dare to write "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" on his brow. But when He, who is the King of the Jews and the High Priest of His church, shall come, He shall reign in Zion, He shall sit "a Priest on His throne," Zech. vi. 13. He shall rule in righteousness and peace. His "people shall be all righteous," Isa. lx. 21, "an holy nation," His glorious Name written on their hearts and lives—till, even on the commonest implements of daily service, shall be seen reflected, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD!" Zech. xiv. 20.

We read also that they made coats of fine linen, woven without seam, for Aaron and his sons, for the daily service. The seamless coats, woven throughout, were only for the priests to wear; and Aaron's sons were to be the only priests. It has been asked, What could the Jewish priests of that day have thought, when they saw the priestly coat without seam, on the person of Him whom they had condemned to death for a blasphemer?

Then we have the ending of all the work notified

in a few simple words: "Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, which Moses carefully set down, finishing it with the cloths of service to do service in the holy place."

These cloths were of blue, and purple, and scarlet; they were used to cover the ark and all the sacred things, before they were taken up to be carried by the Levites, when the children of Israel moved onwards. See how zealously the Lord watched over the holy things that belonged to His house! They were to be seen by no eyes but the priests; the very servants who carried them never saw them, they were so closely covered up by the priests before they were moved. Was that to teach men the awful holiness that surrounds our God? The tabernacle was His house on earth, the only place where He put His holy Name; and, therefore, all approach to it was forbidden—no eye was to gaze on anything within, except the priests', who were set apart expressly to be types and foreshadows of the Great High Priest "who is passed into the heavens," and who dwells with God "in the light that no man can approach unto." Brethren, let us take care how we displease our God, by a careless, irreverent way of using the means of grace He has given us!




We read further: "According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them."

The 40th and last chapter of Exodus begins with these words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." And then follows the bringing in, and setting in order the holy things in the tabernacle and in the court. You remember we considered each one, when we read the account of its being made. In the inner chamber, the Most Holy Place, which was never entered but once a year, on the "great day of atonement," there was nothing to be set but the Ark of the Testimony, with the mercy-seat above it. The veil, or thick richly embroidered curtain, hung down in front of the ark, and hid the Most Holy Place from view. In the outer room, or Holy Place, Moses was to set the golden altar of incense before the ark, with only the veil between them. The table for the shewbread, with its twelve loaves in two rows, and frankincense laid upon the bread, was to stand on the north side; and the golden candlestick, with all its belongings, and its lamp lighted, was set on the south side of the Holy Place. Then the pillars of the court were to be set up round about, and the

curtains hung on them, and the gate, with its hangings; completely hindering any one from looking over.

And the brazen altar was to be placed in the court, in a straight line, between the gate and the door of the tabernacle, and exactly opposite the ark, and the altar of incense at the far end; and in front of the brazen altar, between it and the tent door, stood the shining laver filled with water. The place where everything was to stand, was distinctly pointed out to Moses by God Himself. And then the Lord commanded Moses to take the holy oil and anoint the tabernacle itself, and all that was in it, with the altar of burnt-offering and the laver, that they might be made holy, and set apart for the service of God. After the consecration of the tabernacle and its court, Moses, who, as the mediator, acted for God, as well as for the people, was told to take Aaron and his sons, and bring them outside the door of the tabernacle, where the laver stood. There they were to be washed with water, to shew the personal purity and holiness needful for those who are to be God's ministers; and the Lord said, "And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." Aaron's sons were also to be anointed to be priests, for the priesthood was to belong to his family only. The glorious and holy garments of the high priest were, at his death,



to go to his eldest son, who was to come after him in his high office.


We have now nearly done with the tabernacle in the wilderness. It is finished, and ready to be set up, to be a witness for God, until the time of types and shadows shall pass away, and Gospel light shine brightly on the world.



## EXODUS XL.

**I**N verse 17 we read, “ And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.” The Lord’s house had been six months in making, and it was set up when the seventh began, which was the first month of the new year.

A whole year had passed away since the children of Israel had left Egypt, that awful night when the firstborn were destroyed. The Lord had brought them out by His power—He had guided them by His Presence—watched over them by His care—fed them by His bounty—and now He has a house set up for Himself in their midst. It was a good beginning to the year, a good new year’s day’s work, to rear up the tabernacle, that their God might dwell among them. They did not wait till they should get to the promised land. Moses set it up at once in the wilderness, and it went with them through all their wanderings. Ah! my brethren, how should we ever get through this wilderness world, unless the Saviour dwelt with His people?




There is an interesting account given of the orderly way in which everything was set up. We have seen that it was made in all its parts, and all its services were arranged according to "the pattern of things in the heavens" that the Lord shewed to Moses when he was with Him on mount Sinai for forty days. It was to be a type or figure of the Son of God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His great work of redemption and salvation. It was to shew Him as the sin-Bearer: dying in the place of sinners, rising from the dead to justify His people, ascending into heaven, and there making continual intercession for them, sending down the Holy Spirit to be the Sanctifier and Comforter, and being Himself the Light and the nourishment of His church on earth. When the tabernacle was made, the Lord Jesus Christ was in heaven; the time for Him to take our nature, and be born into our world to die for sin, was not to be for fifteen hundred years; and all that long time, His coming and death were to be shewn forth to the chosen people by the tabernacle and its services, till He should appear Himself. But the tabernacle in the wilderness was not set up for the Jews alone: it was for *our* learning. It was to teach us in Christian times, that the everlasting gospel has always been the same. The daily sacrifices, the lambs that were offered up morning and evening, all pointed forward to the great Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, which had

been determined on in heaven before the world was made; and the Christian's feast of thanksgiving, the Lord's Supper, points us back to the same great fact, Christ's willing sacrifice of Himself to put away sin.

Now, don't you see quite plain, brethren, why the grand story of creation is told us very generally, in a single chapter, while the little tabernacle and its services take up a great many? It was not necessary for fallen men to know how the world was made at first; but it was everything to them to know that the lost world was to be redeemed—it was everything to them to know that sinners could be saved, and *how*. It was to teach men *that*, that so much pains was taken to frame and to describe the tent in the wilderness. It was as a picture-book, teaching dimly God's glad tidings to the Jews in those early days; and it is God's Pattern for men in these days to measure their Christianity by; and whenever their teaching does not agree with the account of the tabernacle and its services, it must be wrong—it is not God's gospel.

Let us look at it all once again before we close the book of Exodus.

In setting up the tabernacle on the first day of the new year, Moses would begin by laying down the sockets that the framework was to stand in. You remember that they were made of the silver that each man had to pay as ransom money, when



he was numbered. That was the foundation of the whole building. Brethren, our redemption rests on a ransom too, but not of silver: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed . . . with silver and gold; . . . but with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18. *That* was the price of man's redemption.

The boards and bars of wood covered with gold, were next set upright, and firmly fixed, shewing the wondrous Person of our Redeemer, both God and Man; girding Himself with strength for the work He had undertaken to do. The pillars were then reared up, and the many coverings spread over; the inner ones of spotless white and beautiful colours embroidered with needlework, while the outer ones were rough and homely-looking, without any beauty to the eye. Did those different coverings shadow out the sinless human body of our Redeemer in His low estate? Perfect and spotless, "all glorious within," as He was in "the beauty of holiness," "He was despised and rejected of men." In outward appearance one of themselves—lowly and humble in station and dress—His features worn with sorrow, and aged before His time—His countrymen "saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him: He was despised, and they esteemed Him not," Isa. liii.

The Tabernacle is now complete. In the inner room stands the Ark of the Testimony, with the tables of the ten commandments inside, and the golden lid or mercy-seat closed down upon them;

and soon the glory of God will shine above  
The Most Holy Place represented the heavens where God dwells in light and glory.  
Ark with its mercy-seat shewed Jesus appearing in the Presence of God for us. Having kept the  
in His heart and life, and made satisfaction  
sin by shedding His precious blood, He has entered heaven as our High Priest, and is making  
continual prayer for His people. And God looks down in mercy and love on all sinners who come  
to Him, trusting in the blood of Jesus. He is the mercy-seat or meeting-place between a just God  
and guilty men. The Holiest of all was carefully closed by the heavy, richly-worked veil which  
hung down between it and the outer room, or Holy Place. No eye beheld the Ark, after the glory of  
God appeared above it, but the high priest's alone, when he went once a year behind the veil with  
blood, which he sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, confessing his own and his people's sins, and  
burning sweet incense, which went up in fragrant clouds, veiling the glory which was too dazzling  
for his sight to bear, and filling the Most Holy Place. This signifying that sin had been put  
away by "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," Heb. x. 10, "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, well pleasing to God," Eph. v. 2.  
On this side of the veil was the Holy Place. The golden altar standing in it close to the veil, with its clouds of sweet incense always curling up




towards heaven ; and the golden candlestick with the light from its seven lamps shedding brightness around ; and the pure table of shewbread, with its twelve loaves continually renewed. Surely the Holy Place shews heaven upon earth, that is, Jesus, the Light of the world, the Bread of heaven, the continual Intercessor, dwelling in the church He has bought with His blood, enlightening and guiding her by His Spirit, sustaining and nourishing her by the word of His grace, receiving and offering up her prayers before the throne of God, till He shall come again and take His bride, His loved people, home to Himself ! Oh, our God ! grant us grace to follow Thee here in faith and love, that we may be with Thee when Thou comest to reign !

And the brazen altar of burnt-offering was set near the door of the tabernacle court, and Moses offered on it the offerings that the Lord commanded. Any Israelite feeling conscious of sin, might bring his offering to that altar ; it stood near the door, and faced every way. So Christ, our Altar, is always ready ; any poor sinner may go to Him, and lay his burden down, and know by faith, that Jesus has borne away the load. He is the Door ; no man can go to God except by Him ; and He is the Altar which bore our sins, and the Offering whose bloodshedding took their curse away. And all may go to Him, however heavy laden ; and any one may go, whatever be his fear

or trouble. The blood of the Great Sacrifice has made peace for all who believe.

“And Moses set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal.” (It is said that the laver’s “foot” that we read of, was a bason into which water was poured from the laver, for the priests to wash in.) “And Moses, and Aaron, with his sons, washed their hands and their feet thereat. When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses.”

The shining laver of bright brass, the women’s gift, filled with water, stood between the brazen altar and the door of the Holy Place; no one could enter there without first washing in the laver. We have seen that pure water meant the Holy Spirit; and he who has been saved by Christ’s death, has daily to wash his feet; that is, he must every day seek to be newly cleansed from his daily sins, through the grace of God the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the laver was so bright and shining, that the priests could look at themselves in it, and see that there was nothing soiled about them when they went in to the Holy Place; and that may remind us that Christians should look at themselves daily in the glass of God’s Word, to see whether they are becoming more like what is written there—by the Spirit’s help, getting less and less worldly, and more like Christ their Pattern.



We observe that it was Moses who did everything on that first day. It was he who offered the burnt offerings, and performed every duty that was to belong to the priests afterwards.

Now Moses was not a priest, though he acted as a priest; but he was more. He was in all things a type or figure of Jesus Christ: specially as the Mediator, but also as Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. As mediator, Moses stood between the Lord and the children of Israel; acting on behalf of both parties, and praying for the people: as prophet, he taught them in the law of their God, and foretold what should happen to them in after times, and the great Prophet who should come among them: as priest, he offered the bleeding sacrifices, the burnt offerings, and the incense that shewed forth the acceptable atonement, and the never failing intercession of the great High Priest. And Moses "commanded them a law . . he was king in Jeshurun; when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together," Deut. xxxiii. 4, 5; foreshadowing Him who is King of the Jews, and shall one day return to reign over His re-assembled people Israel!

The last act was to set up the court round about. "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work." Then, as on the seventh day the Lord rested from His work of creation, saw that it was

good, and blessed it; so here, on the first day of the seventh month after beginning it, the work of making and setting up the tabernacle of witness was finished; and the Lord marked His approval, by taking possession of it for His dwelling-place, blessing His people by His Presence among them. The Pillar of cloud and fire removed from its place before the camp, and rested on the tabernacle. "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." Surely they could never doubt again that their God and King dwelt with His people!

The book of Exodus ends, as you have just heard, with the setting up of the tabernacle, and the Lord filling it with His glory; while His Presence in the awful pillar of cloud and fire resting day and night on its top, and towering high into the air, was seen by all the children of Israel, and reverently obeyed as the guide of their wanderings.

The glory inside was such that Moses could not go in. He could not bear the brightness. Mortal man cannot bear to look upon God, the intolerable glory would destroy him. "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18: (not even Moses when he was with Him in the mount) "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Jesus Christ, who was one with God, came down from heaven and lived in this world, and veiled the glory of His Godhead by becoming Man, that we might see God under the familiar endearing aspect of our own flesh and blood, and love Him, and trust Him, and cling to Him as our own very Brother; who has not only the power of God Almighty, but the love, and the tenderness, and the sympathy of a perfectly sinless human being.

We have not seen Him with our eyes, my brethren, going in and out among us, as in the days when He dwelt among men; yet we may see Him now by faith, and know Him as we know no other friend. He said, to comfort all those who could never see Him in this world, "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." Some of God's children have times of such blessed nearness to Him, such joyous consciousness of His presence with them, that it seems *all but seeing* . . . that crowning joy is the longed for happiness of heaven! To see Jesus, our own Saviour, our own Brother, and feel that *we are*

*looking on the face of God.* Blessed Spirit! us holy, make us "pure in heart," that we see Him soon!

Now, my brethren, we have seen the tabernacle set up in the wilderness—we have seen the sacred things set in order inside and out—we have seen the high priest dressed in his beautiful and precious garments, ready to enter on his office. We may now look a little at the services that were commanded, that we may understand how the gospel was preached to the children of Israel; how they were taught the one only way, by which fallen men can be brought back to their Father in heaven.

On reading the account of the services ordered by the law of Moses (which, you know, was given by God), no one can help being struck by the continual blood-shedding. There was blood upon everything. The tabernacle itself, all the sacred things, the garments of the high priest "for glory and beauty," were sprinkled with blood! Every morning and every evening witnessed the taking away of an innocent life, and its blood poured out before the Lord. Every offering for sin must be an offering with blood. Everything to be used in God's service must be sprinkled with blood, as it were to purify it, and set it apart for Him.

Then did the holy God take pleasure in nothing but blood? perhaps some may ask. Could He be pleased by the sight of perpetual death and bloodshed? My friends, if you have understood these

readings in Exodus, you will be at no loss to know the meaning of what was so painful in itself; for you will remember that without shedding of blood, there could be no putting away of sin.

God said to the children of Israel, "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the *blood* that maketh an atonement for the soul," Lev. xvii. 11. Then did the blood of the sacrifices put away the sins of those that offered them? No, surely not, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin," Heb. x. 4. Why was it shed then? What was the purpose of it? To keep the chosen people in mind, that though death is the wages of sin, and that death had passed on them all, because they had all broken God's law, yet that they had been redeemed—that God Himself had provided a Great Sacrifice, who should one day come, and lay down His innocent life, and shed His blood to take away their sins. It was plain that the blood of lambs and calves could make no atonement; for it had to be shed day after day, continually! No, the tabernacle was set up, with its priests and its sacrifices, with the daily shedding of innocent blood, to teach the Israelites to look forward, and us to look back, to that one, all-sufficient Sacrifice, which had always been determined on, and was offered up on mount Calvary, when the precious Blood was shed, which made amends for the sins of the world. And on

that Sacrifice, God looked down well pleased. He was well pleased that His holy, innocent Lamb should shed His blood for guilty sinners—He was well pleased that His Beloved should die as a Man for men; because by that wonderful offering up of Himself, Almighty Justice was entirely satisfied, and mercy could shine forth. God was seen as the holy, and true, and just Governor of all creation; while He became the merciful and compassionate Saviour of poor fallen man. How this was, brethren, I cannot help you to understand; but oh! believe it, take it on His own word; trust in it, and you will find it the life of your souls and bodies for ever!

The most part of the children of Israel would see only what was before their eyes, in the tabernacle service. They would not understand its true meaning, nor see what was shadowed forth by those “patterns of things in the heavens.” They would be satisfied with bringing their appointed offerings; while many would be very exact, like the Pharisee in our Lord’s parable, in attending to all the smaller matters of the law, and very much pleased with themselves for being so different from many of their neighbours. But there were always some who saw farther, and who felt the meaning of what they saw. To such believing worshippers, deeply conscious of the burden of sin, not daring to lift their eyes to the holy heavens above, what must it have been to rest them on the bleeding sacrifice, and to know



that it pointed out the better Blood, which *could* take away their sin? How earnestly would they gaze on it, smiting their breast with repentant sorrow, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner"! Luke xviii.; be favourable to me for the sake of Him, shewn forth by yonder lamb, who is coming to shed His own blood to put away sin! How thankfully would the believers of old, bless God for having so far made known to them His great salvation!

Thinking men among the children of Israel, would see that those things were nothing in themselves, but only types and shadows of good things to come. When they saw their high priest, first offer a sacrifice for himself, before he offered for the sins of the people, they would know that they were not to rest in Aaron, a sinful man like themselves, who needed to repeat his offering every day; but to see in him a figure of the true and sinless High Priest of His people, "who needeth not daily (like the Jewish high priest), to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when he offered up Himself," Heb. vii. 27. And that offering was made once; for all, and for ever. It can never be repeated: nor need it, for it is perfect and complete, and all sufficient both for God and man. Whoever trusts in it, will find that he rests on a sure foundation, that can never be moved. And as there is no more offering for sin, so there are no more priests. We have no priests in the Christian church, my

brethren, and we don't need any, for we have no sacrifice to be offered for sin. The only Priest we have, is He who lives for evermore in heaven. The clergy of our church are no priests, they are ministers of the Word.

Thank God, there is no priest between a sinner and the Saviour! Our own High Priest in heaven is always praying on His people's behalf. We have Him to go to, we want no other. Look to it, my brethren, that you are resting on the crucified Jesus, as your only Saviour, and your only Priest.

It is not easy to turn away from the tabernacle in the wilderness; there are still so many interesting things about it, that we have not even glanced at, but these would carry us beyond the book of Exodus. We must look at the sacrifices a little more before we close.

There were two kinds of sacrifices—sin-offerings, and thank-offerings. The sin-offering was to be a clean animal taken from the herd or flock, perfect of his kind, in the full vigour of his age and strength; or, for the poor who could not bring an ox or a lamb, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons were accepted instead. You remember that was the humble offering of the Virgin Mary, our Lord's mother, when she came to present her Infant Son in the temple.

We saw, when we read about the passover, how the lamb was to be without spot or blemish, because it was to represent Jesus, the spotless Lamb

of God. So were the sin-offerings we are speaking of now. The offerer was to bring the animal to the brazen altar, of his own free will: he then laid his hand on its head, as a sign that he laid his sins upon his sacrifice; it was standing in his place. The animal was then killed, his blood poured out on the ground, and the whole carcase burnt upon the altar. That was to represent Jesus Christ, in the prime vigour of His holy spotless Manhood, bearing our sins in His own Body, and willingly giving up His life in our place, "an offering and a sacrifice to God," to make atonement for the sins of the world.

When a peace-offering was brought, only the fat and inward parts were burnt on the altar: that was for God; while the carcase was carried home by the offerer, and used for food, to shew that both God and man has a part in the great Sacrifice of the death of Jesus.

Remember it well, my brethren, that there are no sin-offerings now, nor can be. There have never been any since Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of sacrifice, made an offering of Himself, once for all, for God and man. His death on the cross completely satisfied God's justice, and met all man's necessities; so that there is no need and no room for any other sacrifice for sin. God can accept no other, and man can require no other, for Jesus said, "It is finished." And now, in heaven, He intercedes for His people, but He dies no more.

O brethren, if men perish in their sins, it will not be because there was not atonement enough to save them !

By the law of Moses, if an Israelite had committed sin of any kind, he was unclean ; he had to bring the appointed offering before he could be allowed to attend the worship of the Lord's house again.

Wilful sin, sins of ignorance, shortcomings of any kind, needed a bleeding sacrifice to put them away. An innocent life had to be taken to make amends for man's wrong-doing ; whether he had committed awful crimes, as David did, or only made an ignorant mistake in the appointed worship. Blood was shed to atone for the smallest error. Blood was shed to wash out the sin of deepest dye.

My brethren, you understand why that was, don't you ? The death of Jesus Christ, which was signified by all that blood-shedding, was to make amends for sin, to God, in the first place. But God and man look at sin very differently. Men don't hate sin for what it is *in itself* ; only for what it *does to them*. Men think murder, and adultery, and theft, and false witness great sins, and have them severely punished, and rightly so, because they do harm to society ; but they can't take notice of coveting and evil thoughts, and they don't feel much about sin against God. A man may live in complete forgetfulness of God

his Redeemer, and yet be an honoured and respected member of society; but God sees not as man sees: man judges by the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

It is *sin itself* that God hates. He knows better than we do, its awful, and malignant, and poisonous nature; He knows that the smallest bit of it can ruin a whole world. And it was to destroy sin, *as sin*, to put it out of the world, that He gave His Son to die. His death was the only cure for it—His blood was the only thing that could wash it away. And that blood is as much needed to cleanse the sinful nature of a newborn child, as to wash out the darkest stains of a hardened sinner. The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse both, and nothing else can cleanse either. Now you see why, in the tabernacle service, every great sin, and every little error, needed blood-shedding to put it away.

My brethren, the “Fountain filled with blood” is always open. Sinners must go to it to be saved; and God’s children must go to it day by day to be cleansed from their daily sins, through a fresh application of it—a fresh trust in Christ’s death, through the Holy Spirit. When they fall into sin, they have only to look up and see their Advocate pleading for them before God; and they know that His death is always availing for them, and His blood “continually cleansing them from all sin.” And by and by, He will come again, and

present His purchased people “faultless” before His Father’s throne, with exceeding joy!

The sin offerings are done with for ever; but the freewill offerings of thanksgiving remain.

In old times; the believing Israelite who had received peace through the sin offering, might come again to the altar, to bring his offering of thanksgiving to the Lord. And that ~~thank~~offering might have blood, or it might not: it might be an animal, or it might be fine flour and oil. If it were an animal, it did not need to be spotless and perfect like the sin offering, for it was not to represent Jesus, the Lamb of God; only the offerer’s gratitude. But it should be as good as the man had, and be given of right good will; and it was graciously accepted as a thankoffering.

That was the Jewish ordinance: now for the Christian meaning.

A sinner saved, should be a sinner thankful. Since God did not keep back His only Son, but freely gave Him up; the man is bound thereby to give himself, his best, that is, his *heart*, to God. Since Jesus has died for *him*, he must live for his Saviour.

St Paul knew well how saved sinners should feel and do; and what does *he* say? “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (that is, I beseech all you who have been washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus), that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. Reasonable, surely, that they for whom He has done *all*, should render what they can, to Him!

And such an offering, an offering of thanksgiving, is all that a pardoned sinner has to offer, is all that a Christian has to give.

Notice, the Israelite did not bring his thankoffering, till he ~~had~~ brought a sin offering first. He must be at peace, before he could be thankful. My brethren, we must be at peace with God through the blood of Jesus, before we can do anything to please Him—only a *saved* sinner can bring an offering of thanksgiving, for he knows what has been done for him. Again I remind you, we must trust in Jesus as our Saviour, before we can obey Him as our Example. Look at David, when he knew he was forgiven, and his great sin put away, he seems hardly to know how to speak his grateful love: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit: *then* will I teach transgressors Thy ways. . . . O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it," Ps. li. And don't you remember the gaoler of Philippi's thankoffering? When, through Paul's words, he was brought from his deep despair to the peace of God; he washed the apostles' stripes, and was baptized in the name of Jesus with all his house (and it was no light matter in those days to be called a

Christian), and brought them into his house, and refreshed them with the best he had, rejoicing to shew his grateful love to his newly found Saviour, in the person of His messengers. Acts xvi. Be you like that man, my friends ; rest your souls on the Lord Jesus Christ, then go and bring Him the freewill offerings of grateful hearts. Do what you can for His sake : whether it be struggling against bad habits which it grieves Him to see, or practising some self-denial that you may help a poor neighbour, or bearing a trial cheerfully and meekly. However weak and imperfect the little offering may be, He will kindly and graciously accept it, as done for Himself. Ah ! He is no hard Master that we serve, but a loving and beloved Friend that we cling to ; who has a Father's tenderness, and an Elder Brother's generous sympathy for His people !

And while we bless God for the clear light and knowledge of our days, through the gospel of His grace, let us thank Him for the foretaste given by the book of Exodus. Let us rejoice in believing that many and many in old times, saw Christ from afar, and found peace through the Great Sacrifice that God had provided, and shewed to His people by the Tabernacle in the wilderness !

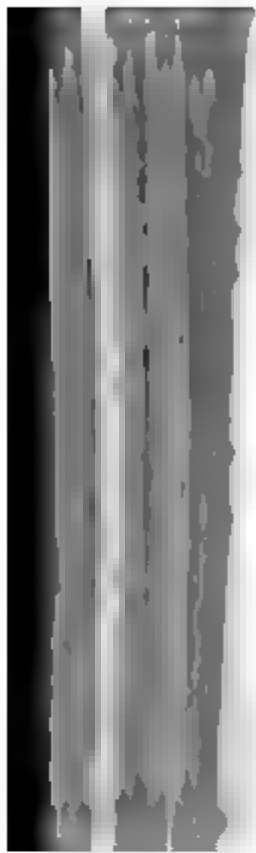
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